

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 377 859

IR 055 298

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TITLE A Quarter-Century of Attacks on Oregon Public School Library and Text Books: A Chronological Study.
PUB DATE 15 May 94
NOTE 111p.
PUB TYPE Historical Materials (060) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC05 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Academic Freedom; Books; *Censorship; Educational History; Elementary Secondary Education; Library Collection Development; *Library Material Selection; *Moral Issues; Moral Values; Nonprint Media; *Parent Attitudes; Public Schools; Religious Cultural Groups; Sanctions; *School Libraries; Standards; *Textbook Content

IDENTIFIERS *Oregon; Profanity

ABSTRACT

This paper compiles information pertaining to over 200 challenges to public school library books, text books, reading series, magazines, newspapers, plays, and nonprint materials in Oregon from 1968 through 1993. Although Oregon ranks 29th in the nation in population, it is second only to California in the average number of challenges in school districts each year. The most challenged item has been the reading series "Impressions," with about a dozen known challenges. The greatest number of challenges have occurred in Salem, the state capital, home to a number of special interest groups. A large number of the challenges were spearheaded by religious right organizations, frequently the Oregon Citizens Alliance, a group dedicated to promoting Christian values and fighting equal rights for homosexuals. Most challenges were based on perceived promotion of anti-Christian actions or beliefs, profanity, sexual content, violence, scariness of stories, and negative depictions of particular groups. An attachment lists the challenges. (SLD)

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A QUARTER-CENTURY OF ATTACKS
ON OREGON PUBLIC SCHOOL LIBRARY AND TEXT BOOKS:
A CHRONOLOGICAL STUDY

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May 15, 1994

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A Quarter-Century of Attacks
on Oregon Public School Library and Text Books:
A Chronological Study

This paper offers a compilation of information pertaining to just over 200 incidents of challenges to public school library and text books, readings series, outdoor and other special school programs, magazines, newspapers, films, videos, television programs, plays, readings, and even a sign.

The challenges are all that are known to have occurred in the quarter of a century from 1968 through 1993. Used as sources for the report were newspaper articles in my own possession, newspaper articles quoted in the Newsletter on Intellectual Freedom, reports found in People For the American Way's annual summaries of "Attacks on the Freedom to Learn," and annual reports from the Oregon Intellectual Freedom Clearinghouse operated by the Oregon State Library. Also, I conducted several phone interviews in order to find out the final disposition of cases not completely reported by my sources.

Some highlights from the 110-page (double-spaced) paper:

Oregon, though ranking 29th in the nation in population (at 3 million), is second only to California -- the country's most populous state -- in the average number of challenges to books, etc., filed with school districts each year;

The degree to which challengers protested school officials' choices of books, etc., also appeared to be out of character with Oregon's reputation as a progressive, independent, "live and let live" type of state;

The most challenged book, etc., in Oregon over the past 25 years has been the reading series Impressions, with about a dozen known challenges (More Scary Stories to Tell in the Night was second);

The city in which the most challenges occurred is Salem, the state capital and, therefore, home to a large number of special interest groups;

Portland, the state's largest city at just under 2 million population, had one reported challenge over the 25 years covered, while suburban communities such as Beaverton, and tiny rural towns like Prineville and Eagle Point had about a dozen apiece;

A very large number of the challenges were spearheaded by religious right organizations, more often than not the Oregon Citizens Alliance, a group founded to promote Christian values and which puts most of its efforts into fighting equal rights for homosexuals;

The majority of the challenges were based on perceived promotion of anti-Christian actions or beliefs, such as Satanism, secular humanism, New Age religion, witchcraft, the occult, etc. Other topics of challenges included profanity, sexual content, violence, scariness of stories, and negative depictions of parents, women, men, loggers, hunters, etc.

"You can tell when it's fall, because that's when school starts and that's when, somewhere in the land, a parent objects to having his teen-ager read The Catcher in the Rye. This year, it's fall in Beaverton . . ."¹

The Eugene, Oregon Register-Guard's observation, quoted above, is only partially accurate -- fall is a time for challenges to books schools choose to place in their libraries or use in their classrooms. But so too is winter, and spring, and summer. The nation's school districts have been forced to deal with nearly 2,000 complaints against books and other learning materials in just the past seven years -- 395 in the 1992-93 school year alone, according to People For the American Way (PAW), a public school censorship watchdog organization. The attack on J.D. Salinger's novel in the state of Oregon is certainly not unique, as The Catcher in the Rye is indeed one of the most challenged books in the country, second only to John Steinbeck's Of Mice and Men, reports PAW.²

What is surprising to many is that Oregon -- ranked behind 28 other states in population³ -- has been, on average over at least the past 11 years, the nation's second-most active state when it comes to the filing of challenges against books and other educational media. Oregon placed behind only California,⁴ the nation's most populous state.⁵ To earn that dubious ranking, Oregonians filed more than 200 complaints in the past 25 years -- the time span covered by this research project. All but 29 came

since 1982. "Number two in the nation for book banning . . . isn't something we should be proud of," says Sallie Tisdale, co-chair of PEN/Northwest, an organization of regional writers.⁶

Why Oregon?

"We just do a better job in reporting statistics," said Oregon state librarian Wesley A. Doak in 1990. The quality of the reporting is due largely to the state library's creation of the Oregon Intellectual Clearinghouse, the nation's first such resource in documenting challenges to the state's public and school libraries.⁷ Oregon is more rigorous than any other state in collecting data on book challenges, says Mary Ginnane, director of the state library's clearinghouse. "Librarians just have to look at (challenges) as part of the democratic process. People have the right to question the way their tax money is spent" and to seek to protect their children from ideas they don't want them exposed to. The problem, says Ginnane, comes when "they expand that to all children."⁸

"These actions apparently rise from a view that our national tradition of free expression is no longer valid; that censorship and suppression are needed to avoid the subversion of politics and the corruption of morals," according to an American Library Association's "Freedom to Read" statement adopted by the Jackson County, Oregon, library system in 1981.⁹

The people most likely to try to "direct the content of the curriculum for everybody or remove something from the library"¹⁰ are members of the religious right, contends David Crane, vice

president of PAW. His organization's 1992-93 report of challenges indicates that "more than 20 percent of all incidents were the handiwork of right-wing political organizations and individuals working at the national or local level. An additional 18 percent . . . were clearly inspired by these groups."¹¹

Several of the challenges in Oregon have shown clear evidence -- or at least the strong suggestion -- of connections with the ultra-conservative Oregon Citizens Alliance (OCA) and national organizations such as the Eagle Forum, Citizens for Excellence in Education, the National Association of Christian Educators, Focus on the Family, the American Family Association, and book critics Mel and Norma Gabler. Another indication of the organizational influence occurred when Ralph Reed, executive director of Pat Robertson's Christian Coalition, debated former National Endowment for the Arts director John Frohnmayer on the topic of censorship at Southern Oregon State College in 1993. Local leaders of the Oregon Citizens Alliance actively promoted their followers' attendance at the event and then met with Reed at its conclusion.¹²

It's not just the far right who are involved in challenging books and other learning materials. "Seven percent of the reported incidents (nationwide) could be described as left-wing challenges," says the 1992-93 annual report.¹³ Doak, of the Oregon State Library, agrees, saying that in addition to those he terms "far right wingers," libraries now have to deal with liberals and their objections. "And one area not explored enough

is pure egotism. It used to be fear and ignorance, but the tough ones are the egotists. They seem to know what's best for everyone and give intellectual freedom in Oregon the toughest time."¹⁴ It isn't just conservatives, liberals or, for that matter, egotists who are behind what the Oregonian refers to as "the anguished cries to prune the tree of knowledge." "It comes from everyone," says state intellectual freedom clearinghouse director Ginnane.¹⁵

Oregon is supposed to have a reputation of being a place where there is a "live and let live" or "libertarian" (with a small "L") attitude; a state respected for enacting the nation's first "bottle bill," designed to keep roadsides free of unsightly trash; a state where virtually all ocean beaches are publicly owned in order provide access for all citizens, not just the wealthy; a state where you will find service station attendants still pumping your gas for you; a state where independent voters often outnumber republicans or democrats; a state where those voters elected such progressive and independent governors as Tom McCall and Neil Goldschmidt, and senators as Wayne Morse and former governor Mark Hatfield, among many others.

"What's going on here? Cultural change, that's what," according to a March 24, 1994 Ashland Daily Tidings editorial. . . . "It's become apparent that Oregon has lost its reputation as beautiful, quiet enclave from the rest of the United States. As communication and transportation have improved, giving us a window onto things everywhere, our state has begun to mimic other parts of the country, which at one time were culturally as

overstatement to say Oregon has been free of discrimination over the years -- ignorant twits are everywhere, Oregon included -- but the bigots rarely have been so visible or so tolerated. . . . The enthusiastic manner in which 20 Oregon cities and counties have endorsed OCA anti-gay measures has likely done more to ruin Oregon's reputation as a 'live and let live' pioneer state than all the drive-bys, racists, Packwoods and Hardings combined. 'Live and let live' is a laughable way to describe today's Oregonians. 'Live and then we'll pass judgment on you' appears to be more accurate."¹⁶

Schools have borne much of the brunt of these changes in how citizens of the state (and nation) feel. "Both conservative and liberal parents are broadening the scope of their dissatisfaction with how schools are operated, both financially and educationally," said the Daily Tidings last fall. And, the paper continued, they're "getting more specific about what's happening inside the classroom, right down to what books their kids are reading."¹⁷

In the arena of library and textbook censorship, the position of the OCA and other far right organizations and individuals was pretty well expressed by an objector to Jean M. Auel's The Clan of the Cave Bear: "We've gone too far with freedom of speech (and) other freedoms."¹⁸ Others have also been quite outspoken in their opposition to certain books. A person objecting to Horror on High Ridge, for example, argued that, "The pen is mightier than the sword. Material like this slashes minds

pen is mightier than the sword. Material like this slashes minds to impotent shreds." And (Our) "students have no need to understand life in a ghetto," as depicted in Manchild in the Promised Land, said a resident of Parkrose, a Portland suburb.

Some defenders of the right of school districts, not individual citizens or pressure groups, to choose library and textbooks have been just as strongly opinionated. Steve Miller, former superintendent of the Eagle Point schools said, "We should be concerned about the willingness of people to legislate individual values for everyone."¹⁹ "No one has the right to censor material for others," said an Albany district review committee report.²⁰ And a school board member in Bend put it this way: "I really feel the only thing we have to fear from the written word is if it's hidden."²¹

"There is a limit to the materials we display in a public library," says the OCA, according to the Daily Tidings. But, the paper adds, "the limit must never be defined by the OCA or any other political party or group. It must be decided by librarians' judgment. . . . Free Oregonians, including parents and children, can make up their minds about the worth of library books without instructions from the government or from any thought police on the left or the right."²² Syndicted columnist James Kilpatrick agrees: "Let us hear it for good librarians everywhere -- and especially for the good librarians in public schools. If they purchase a few books with four-letter words, let us be tolerant. A high school student will have discovered the four-letter word

for flatulence before he reads Chaucer in the library."²³

"Parents ought to have a voice about what's appropriate and what's inappropriate," contends Tom Minnery, vice president of Focus on the Family, based in Colorado Springs, Colo.²⁴ What some have done, however, says the Daily Tidings, "is to take the easy way out when it comes to educating their children. Instead of helping their kids put some of this classic, often challenging reading material in context, they've opted to try to get rid of it altogether, sort of a 'shoot the messenger' philosophy. That's dangerous, because it perpetuates the notion that if something doesn't agree with our political or moral code, we have the right to eliminate it. Next, we'll be inviting Hitler and the KKK over for dinner. . . . It's certainly not out of line to expect parents to be concerned about what their kids read at school. . . . But for the most part, what's needed is a little less knee-jerk overreacting and a lot more education."²⁵

"It's a plus, for the most part, whenever a parent is interested in what's happening in school." Still, says the Medford Mail Tribune, "it is one thing to help in the shaping of a child's education and quite another to try and dictate what all children should be taught. The line is especially fine when it comes to books. It is crossed whenever a parent goes beyond asking that their child not be exposed to a particular work, and demands that it be banned so that no child may read it."²⁶ Teachers, librarians, administrators and local school boards must be willing to stand up to the censors, and not avoid using

where people are feeling so chilled in the exercise of those rights, we've got a real problem," according to Anne Penway, assistant director of the Office for Intellectual Freedom at the American Library Association.²⁷ Having local boards with the power to have a voice in local children's education is "part of our democratic value system -- right along with abhorrence of censorship -- and we have a right to take the questionable with the good sometimes," contends the Mail Tribune.²⁸

In writing about "an outraged mom" who demanded that a Long Island school remove Where's Waldo? from its library because she noticed a bared breast "about the size of the last letter of this sentence" in the book's illustration of a crowd on a beach, columnist Anna Quindlen says:

"These people were not satisfied with banning certain books for their own kids; they wanted to set policy for their neighbors' children as well. . . . The impulse that is at the heart of most book-banning in this country . . . is the temptation to treat children like morons, to sell little people short. Don't do it. . . . The brain is a muscle, at least figuratively, and to develop it you have to work it. If kids don't run up against ideas that are disquieting, or challenging, or different from what their parents believe, how will they ever grow as human beings? . . . Ideas are only lethal if you suppress and don't discuss them. Ignorance is not bliss, it's stupid. Banning books shows you don't trust your kids to think and you don't trust yourself to be able to talk with them. Knowledge is

don't trust yourself to be able to talk with them. Knowledge is power. The breast is on page four of Where's Waldo? Your kids can handle it. It's the adults who have the problem."²⁹

"We oppose efforts of individuals or groups to limit the freedom of choice of others or to impose their own standards or tastes upon the community at large," states the National Council of Teachers of English.³⁰ But, "Being concerned about what your children are learning in schools is not censorship," says Oregon Eagle Forum president Sue Gallagher.³¹

"This battle is not about politics nor is it about religion," says Arthur J. Kropp, president of People For the American Way. "It is, very simply, about preserving the right of America's children to the very best education our public schools can give them."³²

How has this battle gone during the past 25 years in the state of Oregon? What follows is a chronological (for the most part) report of the known complaints concerning books, magazines, newspapers, in-classroom television programs, films and videos, reading series, self-esteem programs, games, musicals, plays, comic books, tests, oral presentations, and even building wall signs, filed and requiring official action over the past quarter-century.

The most-challenged learning tool in Oregon since 1968 has been the Impressions reading series, cited for promoting disrespect for parents, witchcraft and the occult, use of Canadian spellings, etc. Formal complaints against the series

were filed in at least 10 school districts over a five-year period. Alvin Schwartz's Scary Stories to Tell in the Dark and its sequel, More Scary Stories to Tell in the Dark, were the targets of at least seven complaints to take runner-up honors. Some of the better known books challenged in Oregon included: the Bible, The Clan of the Cave Bear, The Three Billy Goats Gruff, The Stand, If Beale Street Could Talk, All Quiet on the Western Front, The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, A Light in the Attic, The Witches, Of Mice and Men, and, of course, The Catcher in the Rye. The latter five, plus Scary Stories to Tell in the Dark, were all on People For the American Way's list of the 10 most frequently challenged books from 1982 through 1993.³³ Other media whose use in the public schools was challenged in Oregon since 1968 included: magazines Time, Newsweek, and Life, as well as many others; the newspaper Christian Science Monitor, and several school papers; the movie Apocalypse Now, and, in fact, all R-rated films; the musical Pippin; the television news service Channel One.

The offensive content of the challenged media, especially books, most often was "at odds with the challenger's religious views" (and/or) dealt with "language or references to sexuality."³⁴ Some of the problem areas considered by Oregonians to be in opposition to their religious views included: lack of concern for family values, lack of respect for parents, promoting abortion, etc.; teaching evolution theory, non-Christian beliefs, Eastern and New Age religions, secular humanism, pantheism,

paganism, etc.; promoting Satanism, demonism, the occult, sorcery, witchcraft and devil worship, etc.; mocking Christianity, Adam and Eve, Christmas, the Bible and God, etc. In the language and sexuality areas, complaint topics included: use of four-letter words, dirty language, nasty stuff, kiddy smut, etc.; depictions of nudity, sexual intercourse, kissing, love scenes, lewd insinuations, etc. Many other complaints were related to presentations of violent or scary story lines, goriness, suicide, drugs, alcohol, poison, etc. Also, objections were raised as to the treatment of specific groups beyond the family, including minorities, women and men in general, environmentalists, loggers, hunters, the Palestine Liberation Organization, the United States Army, Communists, etc.

The list goes on. This compilation of the known complaints resulting in school district actions begins with the year 1968, a quarter of a century ago.

The Vietnam Era

The late 1960s and early 70s was a time of protest over our nation's involvement in the Vietnam "police action," with many of the anti-war demonstrations being held on college campuses and even public school grounds. The Tinker v. Des Moines Independent School District case (393 U.S. 503, 1969), resulting from the suspension of three junior high and high school students for wearing black armbands to school in a 1965 protest over the war, was wending its way through the courts. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Robert F. Kennedy were murdered in 1968. Rioting broke

out in many American cities, including Chicago, Los Angeles and Newark. The incident in which five youths were killed by national guard troops at Kent State University during a protest occurred in 1970. The Watergate scandal and the resignation of President Nixon followed just a few years later. It was a volatile time in America; dissension was the norm.

The arena of book or periodical censorship, however, was relatively quiet. In Oregon, only eight school district actions could be found to have occurred in the years 1968 through 1973. It must be noted, however, that the system of reporting and recording cases of book challenges was quite primitive at the time. The Newsletter on Intellectual Freedom might be informed of an example now and then, but additional anti-censorship organizations, including the Oregon State Library's Intellectual Freedom Clearing House and the Washington D.C.-based People for the American Way, had not yet been founded.

The Oregon cases reported during the final years of the Vietnam era involved just four communities: Dallas, Monroe, Drain, and Phoenix. Dallas and Monroe are tiny agricultural villages near Salem and Eugene, respectively; and Phoenix, slightly larger, is just south of Medford in southern Oregon.

There were no reported complaints in 1968, the year following the Beaverton district action banning The Catcher in the Rye, but the year 1969 saw a pair of school boards remove from their schools three out of four of the books or periodicals challenged.

The magazines Holiday and Newsweek were targets of complaints to the North Douglas School Board in early January. The two national magazines had been available to Drain's North Douglas Elementary School students, but after the district school board followed a recommendation from a review committee, only Newsweek remained in the school library. The board indicated that Holiday "is not suitable for our elementary school," while saying that Newsweek was acceptable because its articles "were merely news reporting."³⁵

In Dallas, comedian Dick Gregory's book, Nigger, and A Patch of Blue, by Elizabeth Kata, were taken off the Academy Junior High School supplementary reading list by superintendent of schools Ray Klappenbach in May 1969. "A group of better students was asked to take the book home for an opinion from their parents," he said. The parental response was that it "was not good reading for an eighth-grade student," said Klappenbach, so he banned Gregory's novel. "It uses a number of four-letter words," he added. There was no explanation as to why A Patch of Blue was dropped. It involves a black man's relationship with a blind white girl.³⁶

Nigger and, for that matter, "any book with lewd insinuation or profanity," was banned from the Monroe Union High School library shelves in an 11:30 p.m. special school board meeting Dec. 29, 1969. The meeting had been called to act upon a taxpayer's complaint about the use of Gregory's book in some high school English classes. However, at its next meeting, Jan. 12,

committee that the new policy would force the removal from the library of The Bible, Tale of Two Cities, War and Peace, Red Badge of Courage, and A Farewell to Arms, as well as halting use of Canterbury Tales in English classes. Upon hearing that, the board voted to repeal its two-week old policy. Nigger was allowed to be shelved in the library, but not used as required classroom reading.³⁷

There were no reported challenges in 1971 or 1972, but activities taking place in 1971 in Stayton, near the state capital of Salem, bear some attention. There, "screening committee" members reportedly threw away books -- or blacked out passages -- they didn't want grade and middle school students to read. "If I saw a page with a love scene or some dirty language, I'd just take it out," said one committee member. The committee of "concerned parents" was formed by the school board 18 months after Stayton residents became upset over the content of school library books. "If the parents find a book objectionable, I will remove it. After all, they pay the taxes to support the school. If an author can't think of ways to convey his message without profanity, then (his book) doesn't belong on the shelves," said librarian Marg Limbrocker.³⁸

Where the Wild Things Are, by Maurice Sendak, was challenged by a parent of a Phoenix-Talent School District first grader in 1973, shortly after a controversy involving another Sendak book, In the Night Kitchen. The parent objected to the latter book's message that, "a person can do almost anything wrong, (be)

message that, "a person can do almost anything wrong, (be) unrepentant and be completely forgiven." District officials said they'd never had complaints about the book before.³⁹ Both books apparently were retained.

Late Seventies: Sex and Politics

The Vietnam war and related protests were done with, but things were only beginning to heat up on the Oregon public school censorship front during the final half of the decade of the 1970s. There were 15 known actions taken in the period, involving not only books, but magazines and films as well.

John Steinbeck's Of Mice and Men was called "trash" by a resident of Halsey, located near Albany in the central Willamette Valley. She also sought removal from the Central Linn High School library of all other books containing what she termed "obscene" words, but a review committee's dismissal of her complaints was upheld by the district school board.⁴⁰

The passage of a state obscenity law (later to be ruled unconstitutional) led Roseburg High School's principal to ban from the school library two dozen publications, including The Catcher in the Rye and Time magazine. Principal Dale Nees observed that librarians could be held liable for distributing books deemed illegal under the new law, so his policy would be: "when in doubt, pull it off the shelf." State department of education educational law specialist Dan Getti disagreed, saying "I can't imagine a high school that would be illegal under this law."⁴¹

The first of many classroom textbook series to be challenged

In the '70s was Promise of America, a five-volume set of books used as the basic texts in the eighth grade at Fern Ridge, outside Eugene. The district board in the fall of 1975 voted to make the books supplemental reading after educators and parents split evenly on whether to retain or remove the texts. Ellie Placek, a self-described "American citizen and concerned Christian parent" led objections to the books, saying they should be removed and destroyed. Among her complaints were that a picture of a car bumper sticker carrying the slogan "Custer Died for Your Sins" was blasphemous, and that Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s 1963 "I Have a Dream" speech should not have been included because he was "a pro-communist race agitator."⁴²

The Oregon Library Association in May 1976 protested the removal of five books from the Gervais Union High School Library. The books removed for examination of their "suitability" included The Angry Hills, The Bird's Nest, The Dictionary of American Slang, The Man Who Loved Cat Dancing, and The Betrayers. An OLA Intellectual Freedom Committee letter to the Gervais superintendent reminded the district that: "The Oregon State Department of Education has guidelines for school libraries which require that school districts have written selection policies and complaint handling procedures." The letter continued: "If an individual or a group can have materials removed from libraries without careful, objective evaluation, whole collections of library materials could be destroyed."⁴³

A principal's unilateral decision four years earlier to

expurgate texts dealing with evolution led to the 1976 filing of a lawsuit against the Milton-Freewater school district.

Superintendent of schools Roger Jorgensen had clipped pages on evolution from textbooks when he was a school principal in 1972 because, he said, they presented evolutionary theory as fact.

Jorgensen's action violated the First Amendment rights of pupils, contended Portland attorney Dean Gislvoold. "Once selected and in use, books are not subject to the censorship of any person or group, including teachers, principals, superintendents or the board. . . . Tearing out the material on evolution in a state-approved textbook is unconstitutional censorship," he argued. To settle the suit brought by two parents and the American Civil Liberties Union, the Milton-Freewater district board ordered the replacement of all the modified books.⁴⁴

One picture of a nude in a spread of 166 photos was enough to cause the Springfield school board in January 1977 to reject the use of a special issue of Life magazine in a high school course on women in America. The 116-page issue on "Remarkable American Women" included the picture of photographer Imogen Cunningham with an unidentified nude woman. The board had approved use of the magazine if the picture were deleted, but the course's teacher and the director of secondary curriculum requested approval of the entire issue.⁴⁵

Images on film also created a fuss in Hillsboro, a suburb of Portland, when parents complained that the movies The Lottery and Future Shock were objectionable. Their concerns led the district

board to ban use of The Lottery and restrict viewing of Future Shock to high school students under guidelines developed by school administrators. The films were provided by the regional education service district.⁴⁶

The discontinuation of the use of a fifth-grade social studies program brought the threat of a lawsuit by teachers in the South Umpqua school district. "We're looking at possible violations of the board's own policy regarding . . . academic freedom or a possible violation of its procedure for handling complaints about controversial materials," said teachers' union representative Randy Venigen.

The controversy had to do with "Man: A Course of Study," which students were led to believe contained "nasty stuff," according to teacher Ed Smith. "The propaganda about the course has filtered down to the kids and given them a mind set that's very difficult to work with. . . . You have to be ten times as firm as normal to keep their minds on the things that really are there to learn," Smith added.⁴⁷

Oregon's textbook law was the subject of an injunction filed in federal court in 1978 by five students from Portland and suburban Gresham. Represented by the ACLU, the students contended that the law violated their rights to have full and free access to information reflecting varying and conflicting views of American history. At issue was the portion of the law which states that books chosen "stress the services rendered by those who achieved our national independence, who established our form

of constitutional government, and who prepared our federal union." Teachers should be able to choose textbooks that include criticism as well as praise, argued the students.⁴⁸

Monroe, scene of the fight over books containing dirty words 10 years earlier, had problems with dirty pictures in 1979. The two sex education books, A Woman's Body: an Owner's Manual, and A Man's Body: An Owner's Manual, were banned from use at Monroe High School after parents complained about the explicitness of the books' portrayals of male and female anatomies. A student had taken the reference books from a health teacher's desk and took them home, where her mother saw them, leading to the complaint and subsequent ban.

The final known action of 1979 dealt with images of males and females in a substantially different manner than the Monroe incident. The exploits of a family of pigs in the book Cars and Trucks and Things that Go were presented in a manner "slanted to the women, and (that) demeans the man and the father image," according to the complaint. The book, shelved in the Trent Elementary School library, was found by a review committee to be humorous, educational, and inoffensive. The school board agreed and retained it.⁴⁹

Early '80s: Bibles and Violence

For 16 years the local chapter of the Gideons International had been distributing Bibles to fifth-graders in Grants Pass and other Josephine County schools. The practice ended at the 17 southern Oregon schools in late 1980 and mid-1981. The Gideons

came within one vote of retaining their distribution rights in the Josephine County school district despite the fact that the state attorney general had said such distributrion on school grounds was unconstitutional. The deciding vote came from board chairperson Sherman Newman, who said, "I'm a staunch supporter of the Gideons, but it's the law." Grants Pass School District passed a similar ban a year earlier."⁰

Church members won the day in Roseburg when, in October 1981, they challenged the allowing of the game "Dungeons and Dragons" in local schools. Superintendent Murl Anderson acknowledged that the game is a useful teaching tool in some respects, but emphasized that it also teaches "fantasies of evil," as the complainants alleged. Anderson convinced school board members that taking the game out of the schools would "avoid a brouhaha over something controversial that has no place in the schools."¹

"Violence and rough language" found in I'll Get You failed to convince the Salem School District board that the book was not what it termed "worthwile reading for young people." Bang, Bang, You're Dead was termed "unattractive and unappealing in many ways" in a review committee report to the board. But the committee still recommended the book be kept because "it presents a strong concept--namely that fighting is not a satisfactory solution to disagreement." The board followed the committee recommendation.

According to Cherie Wallig, curriculum director of the

library media program for the Salem school district, the two challenges brought to three the total for the first three months of the 1981-82 school year, compared with four the entire previous year. The review process is time-consuming, he said, but it "gives people a chance to really think it through."²

Parents of a Seaside Heights Elementary School first-grader contended in the fall of 1981 that the book, The Stupids Die, was illogical and devoid of any value to children, and, therefore, should be removed from the school's library. The use of the word "stupid" throughout the book was demeaning and demoralizing, said the complaint. A review committee recommended the book's retention, and the school board agreed. "Since it didn't really deal with any important things like racism and sexism, it wasn't cause for censorship," said one board member.³

While the members of the Stupid family concluded that they must have died when the lights in their house went out, at least their story remained available to children in Seaside. Herbie Capleenies didn't die--or even think he had--but his life story was banned from Hermiston's Highland Hills Elementary School library in early 1982.

Herbie Capleenies, according to his creators, enjoyed machine-gunning his boring friends and making naked snowwomen. A review committee, upon hearing the complaint about such content from the school's former librarian, recommended the book be taken out of circulation. The school board concurred.⁴

Area ministers, in the spring of 1982, complained to the

Beaverton School District that the musical Pippin was "lewd" and should not be performed by district high school students. A nine-member advisory committee met behind closed doors to hear from resident after resident, one at a time, on the matter. The result of four hours of deliberation was the determination that the play's script had already been revised by the drama faculty "enough to meet the general expectations of the community." Deputy superintendent George Russell also said: "The parents of those not involved in the production should not dictate to the participants as long as the edited version is appropriate for showing."⁵⁵

Comic books joined the variety of media being challenged in the early 1980s when the Central Point School District superintendent ordered all copies of Crazy to be pulled off elementary school library shelves. The Jan. 5, 1983 decision followed complaints from parents that the comic promoted hatred, violence and exploitation by trying to treat humorously such topics as child abuse and family fights. They also objected to a "Play Pen" section satirizing the Playboy centerfold. A committee including one elementary school librarian recommended the ban. She said she originally ordered the comic to make "a variety of material available. If I judged everything in my library, it would be very limited."⁵⁶

Films allegedly biased against Christians drew fire in McMinnville in late December 1983. The film series The Christians also was criticized for "showing very poor scholarship and

they were arrived at." The Yamhill County Education Service District retained the films despite the challenge by nine persons, including several members of the clergy.³⁷

Regional Profile: The Rogue Valley

The communities located along or near a 45-mile stretch of Interstate 5 in Southern Oregon's Rogue Valley are certainly similar in climate, but not, it would seem, in many other ways.

At the upper end of the string is Grants Pass, a center of commerce serving much of Southwest Oregon's citizenry near the interstate and residing in the general vicinity of U.S. highway 199, the so-called "Redwood Highway" to the coast. With a population of about 25,000, it is a community proud of its status as an "All-American City" and role as the seat of Josephine County, but saddled with its reputation for a "redneck" mentality. It doesn't help that the local high school's team nickname is "The Cavemen" and that the anti-abortion activist who recently shot a Wichita, Kan., doctor hails from Grants Pass.

Medford, the Jackson County seat, is but 30 miles southeast of Grants Pass. It is easily twice the population of its neighbor and also traces much of its history to the timber industry. Medford, however, is more of a "white-collar" community and one with a more diversified economy. Among its claims to fame are a major shopping mall and the Harry & David mail-order fruit company and its supporting orchards. It is also a town trying to cope with a Seventh-day Adventist splinter group's billboards attacking the Catholic church as the world's chief agent of

attacking the Catholic church as the world's chief agent of evil."

Bordering on Medford to the north is Central Point and on the south, Phoenix. Talent is just south of Phoenix and Ashland still further south by perhaps three miles. All are, for the most part, bedroom communities serving Medford. Talent is the smallest city at 2,000 population and Ashland the largest at 16,000.

Ashland is unique. The city has a four-year college, Southern Oregon State College (SOSC), one of 36 institutions of higher education in Oregon. But Ashland's is the only four-year liberal arts college south of Eugene, 200 miles to the north. SOSC has an enrollment of about 4,800 students. To this is added the presence of the Oregon Shakespeare Festival (OSF), recognized internationally for its presentation of the works of William Shakespeare and other playwrights. The festival not only brings actors and other "theatre types" into the makeup of the community, it also brings thousands of tourists. The influx of tourist dollars generated by the OSF, added to the financial impact of the college, makes Ashland different -- and much healthier, economically -- than the other cities in Southern Oregon. The presence of the college and the theatre also lead to a population considerably more liberal and cultured than others in the region, if not the entire state.

While each of these communities has characteristics distinguishing itself from the others, each has at least one tie that binds it with them -- repeated problems with text or

library book censorship in recent years.

One of the more notorious examples of challenges to Southern Oregon public school library and/or text books happened 10 years ago in Eagle Point, located a few miles east of the Interstate 5 corridor. It is a community of approximately 3,000 residents, many working in timber-related jobs either in the nearby forests or in mills in or near Medford, 10 miles to the south. As is the case with many other towns in the region, Eagle Point citizens tend to be both conservative politically and hold strong fundamentalist Christian beliefs, according to school board chairman Dick McCulloch.⁵⁹

When district administrators were asked in 1984 to remove The Three Billy Goats Gruff from school libraries, stories of the request and the resulting conflict were carried in newspapers across the nation. In response to the publicity, one Idaho reader wrote to then Eagle Point superintendent of schools Steve Miller that it appeared to be "a case of straining at a gnat and swallowing a camel." The complaint against the Norwegian fairy tale about the goats and the troll contended that its illustrations were too violent and that fairy tales in general promote non-Christian beliefs in the unnatural. The nature of the complaint and its being debated in a public meeting at which the board appointed a media review committee were what led to Eagle Point making the national news.⁶⁰

"We talked about everything that could have an impact on children: the value of the fairy tale, teaching your children how

committee considering the fate of The Three Billy Goats Gruff told the school board. "We all gave a lot of thought to censorship in general and this book in particular," she added. Schools superintendent Miller supported the committee's decision to retain the book, saying: "Freedom of expression and what one reads is a family decision not to be imposed by a group. Individuals have a right to choose what they read and don't read. . . . (We should be) concerned about the willingness of people to legislate individual values for everyone. . . . Local jurisdictions are faced with the authority and responsibility to maintain First Amendment rights for all individuals. That is a larger issue than this book and this complaint."⁶¹

The school board unanimously supported the committee recommendations that The Three Billy Goats Gruff be retained, but that would not be the last time Eagle Point would be the focal point for controversy over book selection. The results have been mixed.

During the 1987-88 school year, a book's title indicated exactly what parents complained could happen to their children if they read it. Reading Nightmares: Poems to Trouble Your Sleep would disturb the sleep of children, the complainants alleged. Also, it was charged that the book provided no learning experience and had no entertainment value. The school board followed a review committee recommendation retain the book but restrict its use by placing it in the "reserved" section of the Little Butte Intermediate School library.⁶²

Little Butte Intermediate School library.⁶²

In early 1989, Little Butte was the target of two more challenges, one dealing with a book called Karen Kepplewhite is the World's Best Kisser, and the other The Magic Grandfather. The complaint over the first book was that it was too mature for the elementary students in the school. A review committee collected reviews of the book and heard testimony from the complaining parent before recommending its retention. The school board voted to approve the recommendation. The Magic Grandfather was said to include swear words and passages about the uses of magic and witches. It is unknown how that complaint was resolved.⁶³

In 1989, the Eagle Point district received a complaint that The Complete Book of Kissing was not appropriate for Little Butte intermediate (grades 3-6) school students. A parent objected to a passage describing a boy and girl kissing, saying it was inappropriate for the age level of pupils in intermediate school. The review committee, however, took the position that the book as a whole was appropriate, and the school board concurred.

Two years later, the book Eric, by Doris Lund, was condemned because of the inclusion of profanities in its content. "All throughout the book are profanities of the very word 'F--- you, mom.' I do not feel that teachers should condone or let students believe that this is acceptable," parent Gaylene Stockton said in her complaint concerning the assignment of the book to her daughter and other students in an eighth-grade language arts class. The review committee recommended, and the school board

agreed, that Eagle Point Junior High School teachers would have to inform parents of the book's profanity before assigning it. The board also ruled, however, that Eric should remain available without restriction in the junior and senior high school libraries.⁶⁴ Shel Silverstein's oft-attacked A Light in the Attic also was retained in the district's primary (kindergarten through second grade) school libraries without restrictions in 1991. The board's action followed a complaint from parent Debbie Conley⁶⁵ that the book contained 21 poems that were considered too frightening, gory, and/or disgusting for young readers.⁶⁶

Not so well-treated later that year was the Prentice-Hall social studies text A History of the United States that included a section on homosexuals and allegedly significant mention of the National Organization for Women (NOW). Critics argued that by placing homosexuals in the same chapter with ethnic and racial minorities, the book created the impression that homosexuals deserved minority status. Concerning NOW, they contended that it was discussed "at length" in the text, while an opposing group, Concerned Women For America, got but "a small paragraph."⁶⁷ Another complaint was that references to God sometimes failed to use the capital letter "G."⁶⁸ The school board rejected the textbook.

Also faring poorly was the book Wellness: Stress Management, one of a series of supplemental health readings proposed for placement in the Eagle Point High School library as resource material, not assigned reading. It was banned by a

February 1992 unanimous vote of the board after three women complained that the book cited yoga and transcendental meditation as ways to reduce stress while failing to mention Christian prayer as another method. "If you're going to have an opening for eastern religious practices, you should have space for Christian religious practices too," said complainant Pamela Dickson.⁷⁰

Exposing children to a variety of cultures and viewpoints without offending a significant number of people in the community is difficult, commented board chairman McCulloch after hearing the complaint. "Our mission is to educate children, and making them aware of cultures and belief systems that exist beyond Eagle Point is an important part of our mission. Simply because those beliefs are not like ours, we can't pretend that they don't exist," he added.⁷⁰

McCulloch then voted to ban the book. In his opinion, he said, there were readily available alternatives that did not offend anybody.⁷¹ Following the vote, however, the school board chair said he had "compromised my principles" by supporting the removal of the book and called the ban "technically incorrect." McCulloch went on to say that the ban was partly motivated by an inability to find a health text acceptable to local religious right activists.⁷²

The way Eagle Point handled challenges was much like that of other communities in which there were multiple complaints to be considered: It was inconsistent, with some requests for removal being heeded and others denied. The decisions appear to have been

based more on how "bad" the review committee or board really felt a book was, as opposed to being the result of regularly followed school district policies and approaches. The whole review process has "kind of gotten out of control," says one Eagle Point High School teacher. "Even a wood-shop construction book has to go through the citizens review committee for approval."⁷³

Eagle Point was not the only Southern Oregon community to see itself split over the issue of book censorship. Central Point had dealt with the comic book Crazy just a year before Eagle Point made headlines with its battle over The Three Billy Goats Gruff while, at the same time, other Rogue Valley communities were having problems of their own.

In Ashland, a 1983 parent challenge of a supplemental sixth-grade text led to its removal. A committee appointed by the school board agreed with the parent's allegation that Today's Basic Science was sexist in that it "presented, both in pictures and words, a clear notion of male superiority in science and a general notion that females are unsuited to scientific endeavors." Bill Moore, then assistant superintendent, said the textbook was the third one challenged in the district in the past 10 years.⁷⁴ Ashland was also one of many districts in which the proposed adoption of the Impressions reading series was challenged in 1987 (see page 36).

The Medford school district faced two challenges in 1984 and apparently allowed its policies to be sidestepped when review committees to hear the complaints were appointed by the district

media coordinator instead of the board itself. One of the challenges was to a high school social studies textbook, The Children's Book of the Earth and the other to a mid-high library book, The Vines of Yarabee. The Medford social studies book was criticized by one student's parents because it said the earth was formed some 4.7 billion years ago. The parents argued that the timeframe wasn't measurable and did not agree with their religious beliefs. The review committee reported to the board that the classroom teacher had told her students that the book's theory was only one of many and that she offered the son of the complainants an alternative text when he objected to the text. The school board agreed with the review committee recommendation that the book be kept without restriction. A mid-high student's parent objected to descriptions of love scenes in The Vines of Yarrabee, but the review committee and board voted to continue its availability in the school library. "What I see on television far exceeds anything on our shelves," said mid-high principal Floyd Pawloski.⁷⁵

At Central Point's Crater High School, principal Mike McClain said he agreed with offering students alternative books if they find the assigned one offensive, but takes a different view when someone tries to ban all students from reading the book. In those instances, a challenge form is filled out and a review committee decides on the complaint. Such was the case with a challenge of Summer of '42, a library book said to contain obscene language in a 1984 complaint. The committee

recommended it be kept.⁷⁶

Mid-1980s: Sex, the Occult, and Sin

Sex education, whether picked up from romance novels or health reference books, was challenged in the mid-1980s, as were books with content seen as promoting the occult and anti-Christian thoughts. For example, more than 50 Harlequin romances donated by residents of Glide were threatened with removal from the high school library in 1984, because of their sexual content. "Teenagers have enough trouble with their emotions without being stimulated by poorly written books," contended a complainant.⁷⁷

In late May, school officials removed one book from the Philomath Middle School library and were considering removal of a second after a city council member protested that the volumes encouraged an interest in the occult. Visions of the Future: Magic Boards was removed because of its poor quality, not occult content, contended the school superintendent. A public hearing was scheduled on the fate of On Reading Palms, another book the councilman challenged. He said the presence of the books in the library implied "school sanction of the occult and I do not believe this is desirable or that it reflects the sense of the community."⁷⁸

It took two meetings of the Sandy Union High School Board resolve the conflict over the sex education book, Changing Bodies, Changing Lives. The district's book challenge advisory committee voted 5-3 April 12, 1984 to reconsider the book's status after the pastor of a local church asked for its removal

due to "foul language and disregard for a wholesome balance about human sexuality."⁷⁹ The problem then went to the board, which agreed on May 21 to transfer the book from the school library to the administration office until a final decision could be made. One of many speakers opposing the book said it gave little attention to the moral and financial consequences of abortion, sex crimes and other sex-related topics.⁸⁰ At its July meeting, the board voted 4-1 to permanently remove Changing Bodies: Changing Lives from school library shelves, although counselors would be allowed to use it as a resource. "I am going to recommend that we replace it with a more appropriate book in terms of the items expressed in the challenge," principal Robert Hutton told the board.⁸¹

A portion of the Oregon law prohibiting use of public school textbooks which speak slightly of the founding fathers was ruled unconstitutional by a federal judge May 14, 1984. The case began six years earlier (see above) when four students from Portland and Gresham challenged the section of the law. Judge James Burns held that the disputed language violated the plaintiff's First Amendment rights of access of information, whether it be favorable or unfavorable with respect to the founding fathers. The assistant attorney general representing the state said he would recommend the decision be appealed.⁸²

Two tie votes on whether to retain Seven Arrows, a book on Plains Indian culture, in the Creswell High School library resulted in the Dec. 12 postponement of any decision by district

school board members.³³ Five days later, with a seventh board member present, it voted 4-3 to continue use of the book. Only students enrolled in an elective course on American Indians were granted access to the book, which was criticized for allegedly pornographic passages on three of its 374 pages.³⁴

A seventh-grade social science book sparked a six-month long controversy in the South Umpqua school district in 1985. Terry Flora, director of the Myrtle Point chapter of Citizens for Excellence in Education, contended that the book, Introduction to Social Science, included concepts "controversial and inappropriate for seventh-graders." Sections on death education, extrasensory perception, genetic planning, group therapy, and religious values had little to do with "basic social studies," she charged, adding, "The whole book is just crummy." Flora and other activists led an April petition drive that gathered 500 signatures of parents challenging the district curriculum committee's choice of the book. Upon receiving the petitions in August, the board refused to adopt the book and told the superintendent to appoint a new curriculum committee. Janet Dobry, director of curriculum, said the decision left her "between a rock and a hard place" because "the best book for the proposed approach" to teaching social studies couldn't be used. "We're not trying to teach some far-out concepts, but we're not trying to teach Sunday school, either," she added.³⁵

Let's Talk About Health, a sex education textbook used in Salem middle schools, was challenged in both 1985 and 1986 for

what was termed a lack of concern for family values and moral guidance, as well as treatment of issues such as dating, premarital sex, homosexuality, and masturbation. The first complaints came in fall 1985, but the school board voted to retain the text, and also have a consultant study its content. The consultant, Western Oregon State College School of Education associate dean Ken Myers, told the board in March 1986 that he felt Let's Talk About Health was "a good match" with the district's sex education curriculum. Board member Jim McComb lashed out at Myers, saying "I would challenge whether or not he read the book." The board then voted to gather additional opinions opposing continued use of the text.³⁶

Accused of making a mockery of The Bible's tale of Adam and Eve, the book In the Rabbit's Garden withstood a challenge from Boring parent Wayne Poteet in mid-1986. The fantasy about two rabbits living in a plush garden allows its featured characters to live happily ever after without punishment after they eat the garden's crop. Poteet contended that the book satirized the Bible by not having the rabbits punished, as were Adam and Eve, for eating the forbidden fruit. In recommending retention of the book, review committee member Clarice Moss said the district needed to protect individual rights and to contest those who might try to impose their view on others.³⁷

Animals were also featured in another book challenged in 1986, but not in the pleasant circumstances of the Boring case. In La Grande, the book Southern Fried Chicken and Other Gruesome

Tales was charged with containing "suggestions of torturing animals" as well as being vulgar and inappropriate for young children. The district allowed the book to remain in elementary school libraries but ordered it restricted to fifth- and sixth-graders only.⁸⁸

The Late '80s: Bad Impressions

The final few years of the decade of the 1980s saw the first of many Oregon challenges to the reading series Impressions, published by Holt, Rinehart and Winston for first through third grades. The challenges, orchestrated by the Oregon Citizens Alliance (OCA), would continue -- with mixed results -- over a period of five years in at least ten school districts in the state.

The first settings for the long battle were in southern Oregon, where the Phoenix-Talent and Ashland school boards voted in 1987 to adopt the series. Opponents argued in vain that the books taught disrespect for parents, discussed the occult, and contained a story that was a parody of Christmas.⁸⁹ Other complaints were that Impressions promoted witchcraft and lying, used Canadian spellings, and contained scary illustrations and stories. Christian radio station owner Perry Atkinson mobilized his listeners against the series, leading to 322 formal complaints about its content.⁹⁰ Atkinson would later become a member of the state board of directors of the ultra-conservative OCA and a sought to become the Republican candidate for the U.S. House of Representatives in the 1994 primary election.

The Phoenix-Talent district tackled the issue again the following spring when a reconsideration committee reviewed the materials in the Impressions series. The review was followed by two board meetings held to receive public input. Organized opposition again surfaced, coordinated by the OCA and backed by Citizens for Excellence in Education (CEE),⁹¹ a wing of the National Association of Christian Educators (NACE), located in Costa Mesa, Calif.⁹² The efforts of the opponents to the series went for naught, however, as the Phoenix-Talent school board in June 1988 voted in favor of retention.⁹³

Impressions lost for the first time in Oregon when the Reynolds School Board of Troutdale in June 1988 voted 5-2 not to include the series in the district's language arts library. The decision came two weeks after more than 200 parents -- about 20 objecting to the series -- packed the May 25 board meeting to voice their opinions. Stories and student activities that advocate spell-casting and chanting "are religious practices, and that goes against my belief in separation of church and state," said one protestor. "Texts should not make fun of Bible stories . . . " said another. Board members, before rejecting the series, voiced concern that it had not been approved by the state and wariness about adopting it before they had seen a revised edition. One, however, challenged witchcraft as an issue: "You can find witches in Macbeth and in many other stories our children grow up with," he said.⁹⁴

The North Marion School District voted to retain Impressions

in 1988, but got rid of it in 1991. "Three years ago this district went through quite a struggle, adopting a series of books conservative groups did not like," said district superintendent Lee Wolfe. The board voted 4-3 at that time to use the series for grades 1-3, but gave in to parents who found the fourth and fifth grade books "objectionable," according to Wolfe. The 1991 decision to drop Impressions altogether had more to do with poor reading scores than with censorship, he said. Wolfe, who became superintendent in 1990, asked the board to support a new "uniform reading program."⁵

Districts in Reedville, Redmond, Lincoln County and Klamath County all retained Impressions after the series was challenged by parents using Focus on the Family materials⁶ and members of a group called "Moms In Touch." The Redmond complaint stated the series had "recurring themes of despair, fear, death, violence, brutality, and revenge . . . psychologically unhealthy to our children."⁷ In Lincoln County, opponents backed by the OCA used a video featuring a man described as a former warlock discussing the dangers of Satanic symbols in their futile effort to convince the board to drop the series. "Some of the stories make me fearful," said parent Pamela Powers. "I don't want my child being taught that those stories reflect real life," she added.⁸

The Reedville objections included charges that Impressions promoted "occult religionism" and "animalism." The latter term was defined as animals doing things they are not capable of, such as happened in the story "Busy Day," in which an elephant wears

clothes and walks on a high wire."⁹⁹ In Lincoln and Klamath counties, both boards reaffirmed their policies of allowing students to opt out of reading stories they or their parents found objectionable. "This is a public institution, and we have to create a balance between individual rights and the need to teach children from a variety of backgrounds," said the Lincoln County district's director of curriculum.¹⁰⁰

Impressions was challenged again later in 1991 in Lincoln County when petitions bearing 551 signatures were presented to the board. Many of the more than 200 citizens present at the May 29 meeting wore red buttons with the word "Impressions" and a black line drawn through it. "The books step over the line from teaching witchcraft to practicing it," contended Powers. Violence in the books, she said, was an outgrowth of its Satanic teachings. Another objector, Julia Bickel, said: "There is not a single story in the K-through-5 books that depicts Christian, Judaic and Islamic religions as (positively as) occultism is depicted." After four hours of evenly divided testimony from more than 50 people, the school board decided to keep using the series.¹⁰¹ "I'll admit that there are some things in the series that are in poor taste that I don't like, but I do not believe that the Lincoln County school district is promoting Satanism as a religion," by using the Impressions series, said board member David Dundson.¹⁰²

A reading series published by Longarm under various titles ran into charges of being too sexually graphic. A formal

challenge was filed against the series' use at Jordan Valley Union High School and the district school board, in August 1987, voted for its removal.¹⁰³ Other 1987 actions included restrictions placed on student access to Values Clarification, in Jefferson, and Just Good Friends, in Eugene.

A parent, using literature from Eagle Forum, Mel and Norma Gabler, and the American Family Association, objected to a Values Clarification lesson in hypothetical reasoning, saying it promoted secular humanism. In response, the high school principal instructed the social studies teacher to omit the lesson concerning choosing who may stay in a fallout shelter during a war. Parents also asked the board to remove evidence of secular humanism and Hatch Amendment violations from the entire school system. The board appointed a committee to look into the requests, and the school librarian resigned in protest.¹⁰⁴ David Gould resigned from the committee because he said he didn't believe in banning books and couldn't support the committee recommendation to allow only restricted use of three activities in the book. The restrictions kept the students from having to discuss out loud or in writing any of the activities' material. "To remove any discussion about the topic is to totally defeat the purpose," said Gould. Dennis Higginbotham, president of the Jefferson Education Association, said "We felt there was no reason to ban activities from the book." Review committee member John Frederic, however, argued that "It is wrong to try to indoctrinate students, especially unknowingly, with any specific

religion, including secular humanism."¹⁰⁵

Copies of Just Good Friends were transferred from Eugene's Jefferson Middle School, open to elementary students, to another middle school having no use of its library by the younger pupils. The October 1987 decision was made by the Jefferson librarian and principal after receiving a formal challenge expressing concern about sexual references in the book.¹⁰⁶

Retained without restrictions in 1987 despite protests being filed was the book Footfalls, challenged in Redmond. Profanity and sexual content, as well as the way in which values were portrayed were the charges made against the book. The Redmond schools superintendent decided to let it remain at Obsidian Junior High School.¹⁰⁷

Profanity was also the subject of a complaint that led to performances of John Steinbeck's play, Of Mice and Men, being censored and then to a federal court lawsuit over the action. Drama students at Rex Putnam High School were seven weeks into rehearsal when district superintendent Ben Schellenberg ordered deletion of profanities in their scripts. The order came despite a recommendation from a citizens advisory panel that called for the language to be retained. A complainant said that, "If we expect students to not use those words in the classroom, it is inappropriate to have them used on the stage." Drama teacher Julie Gibson-Wickham defended her choice of the play and the rights of the students to perform it as written: "This is an incredible issue here if we are going to remain educators with

any kind of integrity."¹⁰⁸

The issue went to federal court in May 1989, where Gibson-Wickham, several drama students and parents, the North Clackamas Education Association, a former NCEA president, and drama student teacher contended that their First Amendment rights were violated by the order to remove all "offensive" language and references to "the diety." By removing the references that might be considered blasphemous by Christians, the district was promoting a specific religion, the plaintiffs argued.¹⁰⁹

Also ending up in court was the long battle over state approval of a fourth-grade social studies textbook about Oregon. The Oregon Supreme Court heard the case concerning Get Oregonized in November of 1987. Charges against the book, written by teachers in 10 school districts and edited by an Oregon State University professor, were that it had a pro-timber industry slant favoring "exploitation" of natural resources. The cost of the book's publication was at least partially covered by timber and agricultural organizations. At issue was whether the state's textbook commission followed proper procedure in endorsing the book. School districts are required to use books on the "approved" list unless they receive permission to deviate from the list.¹¹⁰ The first edition of the book, in use in 26 state school districts, was revised after editor Rod Fielder worked with the Environmental Education Association of Oregon to develop new wording related to timber clear-cutting and many other issues. The Oregon State Board of Education, however, voted

in March 1986 to adopt the controversial book in its original version. "(It) is so anti-environment," said Portland teacher Sandra Grove, a member of the Oregon Environmental Council and the state textbook commission. "Always, the (book's) conclusion is 'We're sorry we have to spray herbicides, but it has to be done. We're sorry we have to burn fields, but it has to be done. We're sorry we have to harvest timber, but it has to be done.' Nothing that it's damaging. It goes on and on. The book is so poor in quality. That's what bothered me." The battle over the book sparked "perhaps the most heated education issue in Oregon in recent history," according to the Los Angeles Times, "far hotter than sex education, creationism and other controversies."¹¹¹

The results of a complaint filed against the novel Manchild in the Promised Land are something of a mystery. A community member in Parkrose, a Portland suburb, objected to the book's use in junior and senior high school honors classes. Complaints included obscene and violent content, degradation of women, and general irrelevance. "Parkrose students have no need to understand life in a black ghetto," argued the objector. A review committee recommended retaining the book.¹¹²

Virtually all of the 1988 challenges to books resulted in their retention, with only one instance in which a volume was even restricted. That case involved class assignments to use the North Bend High School library copy of The Women's Encyclopedia of Myths and Secrets. A formal reconsideration request cited

specific sexual and religious passages in the book and contended such things were of no benefit to anyone. Challenged was the inclusion of the words "castration," "christos," "clitoris," "phallus worship," "rape," and "sex." The objector argued that "What is presented is something you would expect to find in playboy (sic) or some other pornographic magazine, not in a high school library."¹¹³ A review committee recommended the encyclopedia's retention as a reference. The superintendent agreed, limiting its use to optional assignments.¹¹⁴

Twelve junior high school library books were determined to be not "age appropriate" by a Canby parent in the fall of 1988. A district review committee of staff, parents, and other community members recommended retention of all the books. The complainant appealed the verdict on four titles: The Devil's Piper, Gods or Demons?, The Prince in Waiting, and God, the Universe and Hot Fudge Sundaes. The books were said to, respectively: "encourage young minds to pursue occult, suicide, or ill attitudes;" "promote secular humanistic belief in evolution" and portray "The Bible as myth;" "promote positive attitudes toward the occult and ridicule toward Christianity," and; contain "pure 100 percent secular humanism indoctrination."

Canby schools superintendent Milt Dennison ruled that the books should remain in the library. He said quotes sighted as objectionable were "pulled out of context," and stressed that the books are "not required, but available by choice." He added that, "As a parent, I want to have a choice in what my kids read. But I

trust trained professionals over other citizens" to decide what is made available to them in the schools.¹¹⁵

Space Station Seventh Grade withstood two La Grande parents' 1988 challenge that it: contained profanity, sexual obscenity, and immoral values; had no literary value; was sexually and socially degrading; and teaches students to downgrade values and be disrespectful to others.¹¹⁶ According to a review committee member, the book showed "how a teenager's view of the world is different from an adult's view." The school's English Department chairman testified: "We need to teach our students to select appropriate reading material for themselves, much in the same way we all choose when we go to any bookshelf. It would be a better lesson for a student to reject this book on its own merits or lack thereof, than for adults to make this choice for them."¹¹⁷ After also hearing testimony from parents and the middle school librarian, the school board followed a review committee recommendation to retain the book.¹¹⁸

So-called bad language ran into problems again in Prineville, where efforts were made to remove To Take a Dare from the middle school library. One of the same arguments used against the Milwaukie high school production Of Mice and Men was used in Prineville -- that schools condone objectionable language in the classroom by permitting it in library books. A committee of Prineville citizens, two librarians and a counselor recommended to the school board that the book be retained. A board member's motion to remove the book was tabled until the full board could

read it. Once they had, they voted to restrict its use to eighth-graders only.¹¹⁹

The perceived scariness of books in The Dalles and Mt. Angel had much to do with complaints against their presence in school libraries. More Scary Stories to Tell in the Dark was alleged to be too scary and violent to be on the shelves of the Dry Hollow Elementary School in The Dalles. Both a district review committee and the school board disagreed and the book was retained without restriction. The Witches of Worm was considered not only too scary for children but also attacked for its witchcraft theme. The book remained in the Kennedy High School library after a review committee recommendation was followed by the district superintendent.¹²⁰

A complaint about James Baldwin's If Beale Street Could Talk being available to middle school students led the St. Paul school board on March 27 to not only take it out of circulation, but to also not allow any middle school student to check out any work of fiction from the high school library. St. Paul is a farming community 30 miles southeast of Portland.

Complaints about the Baldwin book were that its contents include sexually explicit passages, profane and obscene language, and offensive remarks directed toward Christianity. A review committee of four staff members and two parents recommended the book be retained but restricted to students with parental consent.¹²¹ Primus St. John, a professor of English at Portland State University, supported If Beale Street Could Talk, saying:

"This book is about young love and growing. It's also about black survival in a brutal society and the courage of a young couple in the face of insurmountable odds. It's about fierce family loyalty and love." And St. Paul English teacher Judy Brown told the school board that she felt If Beale Street Could Talk had redeeming characteristics. Board member Jerry Smith disagreed, saying "The explicitness of the book overrules its being a good piece of literature."¹²² The board then voted to end the book's 11-year tenure on the library's shelves.¹²³ "We decided it would be better just to remove it," rather than allow even its restricted use, one board member said.¹²⁴

Following the decision to ban If Beale Street Could Talk, the board also voted to restrict any student younger than high school age from checking out fiction from the high school library.¹²⁵ (None of seven sources of information on this board action contained any further discussion of that particular decision.)

There were 17 other known challenges to Oregon school books, play scripts and films in 1989. Most complaints were much like those filed in the previous few years, dealing with profanity/obscenity, anti-Christian statements, etc. Also, an increasing number of complainants appeared to have the backing of state or national organizations. Some of the more unusual actions concerned play manuscripts and films.

In Scappoose, objections were raised to the reading of two plays by Arisophanes, Lysistrata and Ladies Day, in a high school

advanced placement English class. The plays contained obscene material, according to the complaint. A review committee evaluated the materials, and they were retained by vote of the school board. Following the controversy, just prior to an election in which two board members were running for re-election, a flyer was distributed with the headline: "Obscenity in Your Scappoose Schools, and Your School Board Voted Has Voted to Keep It." The flyer originated at the First Congregational Church. The schools superintendent said the flyer was "inaccurate, misleading vengeance, cut and dried, slanted to damage two people who have devoted long hours to our schools." The two incumbent board members subsequently were re-elected.¹²⁶

Nudity in the Stanley Kubrik film A Clockwork Orange led to the film not being shown in Brookings High School. An administrator vetoed the film after determining that the community would not wish it to be shown. "If this were South Eugene, it'd be fine," he said, "but not in Brookings," the southernmost city on the Oregon Coast. The teacher who had shown the film got signed permission slips from parents of 96 of 98 students, suggesting that the community did, in fact, approve of its showing.¹²⁷

Stephen King's book, The Stand, was the target of a complaint but ended up being retained, with a somewhat unusual caveat, at the Whitford Intermediate School in Beaverton. The book's sexual language, casual sex, and violence led a parent to protest its availability in the school library, saying that that

was like letting 12-, 13- and 14-year-olds see "R"-rated movies. A committee made up of the parent, the school principal and two librarians made the final decision to restrict the book's use to ninth-graders having parental permission,¹²⁸ and to shelve it in "a professional library used mainly by adults."¹²⁹ Offensive (along with degrading and demeaning) language, as well as material that: focused on the seamy side of life; did not enlighten, uplift, or encourage character-building traits; and provided a clear message that it is alright to flaunt authority, were all charges against library availability of The Wolfman of Beacon Hill at Pilot Butte Junior High in Bend. The school board, however, following a review committee recommendation, voted to retain it.¹³⁰

Prineville's Crook County Middle School, where To Take a Dare was challenged and then retained and restricted, gave Angel Dust Blues the same treatment following allegations that the book was "pornographic trash" full of foul language. Asked again -- as it had been with To Take a Dare -- was the question why such language would be banned in the classroom and at school functions, but not in library books.¹³¹ The complainant, a local pastor, also contended the book contained "explicate (sic) and erotic type of writing." The school librarian requested that the book be moved to the high school library.¹³² Alanna, In the Hand of the Goddess, and The Woman Who Rides Like a Man were all removed from the David Hill Elementary School library in Hillsboro by a library staff member who found them to contain

sexual references and the suggestion that use of an amulet would prevent pregnancy. The books were returned to the library shelves after a teacher and an administrator discovered their absence. Also, the school district clarified the process for challenging materials, indicating that it applied to staff as well as private citizens.¹³³

The raising of questions about sexual arousal, as well as how Then Again, Maybe I Won't approached other issues (i.e., relating with parents and members of the opposite sex) facing a young boy growing up were the reasons said to be behind the complaints filed by three Salem-Keizer district parents against the book. "I think Judy Blume's books of this nature encourage an unhealthy preoccupation with sex," said one parent, who added that her husband described the book as "kiddy smut."¹³⁴ After a review committee split 4-3 in favor of keeping it on elementary school library shelves, the school board voted to retain it without restrictions.¹³⁵ "When I read this book, I thought 'that's real life,'" said one board member. "My kids face these issues all the time."¹³⁶

A quartet of books were thought to promote witchcraft and/or the occult, and/or be too scary for some young Oregon readers in 1989. In Prineville, again, The Restless Dead, was "demonic" and "totally proccupied with the occult," according to a parent's complaint.¹³⁷ Also, the book was accused of being macabre and it was felt that reading it would lead to nightmares and unnecessary fear.¹³⁸ A medium and seances were present in Bumps in the Night,

said a Tillamook citizen who offered to burn it and pay for it.¹³⁹ Declining the offer, a review committee of citizens, teachers, a librarian and a principal recommended retaining the book. A third book challenged for mentioning the occult, along with witchcraft and astrology, was The Kid Who Only Hit Homers. The book, like the above-mentioned two, was shelved in an elementary school library. A review committee said it clearly met the district's selection criteria.¹⁴⁰ The Prineville, Tillamook and Beaverton challenges were all turned down and the books retained by votes of the respective school boards. Zerelda's Ogre, however, was removed from the Cascades Elementary School library in Lebanon after a complaint that it was evil, disgusting, bloody and frightening. Also, the complainant felt pictures of children being eaten were inappropriate for a child's book. Ignoring district policy calling for appointment of a review committee, the district superintendent removed it from the library.¹⁴¹ The school principal told the librarian to pursue the fight to keep the book, but she chose not to.¹⁴²

1990: Fundamentalists Come Forward

The values and teachings of fundamentalist Christians became more and more the basis for complaints as the decade of the 1990s began. With increasing regularity, school districts were repeatedly accused of allowing or requiring students to read books or other materials either promoting values and beliefs other than those of the fundamentalists. Some of the most blatant attacks on differing viewpoints involved the newspaper Christian

Science Monitor, books The Earth Speaks and Sunship Earth, and the play Blithe Spirit.

Accusations filed in Jefferson against the Monitor were that the paper promoted the views of the Christian Science Church. Also, the complainant charged the school district with supporting that faith, while not others, through paying for the Jefferson Middle School library subscription to the paper. The school agreed with a review committee recommendation and renewed the subscription.¹⁴³ The Monitor's religious advertising and news content is similar to other papers, according to the review committee.¹⁴⁴

Steve Van Matre's books used in outdoor education programs, The Earth Speaks and Sunship Earth, were challenged in Washington County and Reedville for promoting "New Age Religion," prayer to the earth, and pantheism. Use of the word "magic" was criticized, as was the books' allegedly pro-environmentalist position and "inaccurate science." The Reedville board voted to keep the program serving district sixth-graders, reaffirming that parents are not required to have their children take part. In Washington County, where the complaint had been filed by a non-parent supported by Citizens for Excellence in Education, students were switched to another program.¹⁴⁵ Promotion of New Age Religion -- "Shirley MacLaine kind of stuff" -- and Satanism were objections leveled against Noel Coward's Blithe Spirit when it was presented by Springfield High School drama students. "I just don't believe that contacting the spirit world is something high school

students should be doing or studying or thinking about," said one objector. A letter to the local newspaper said the play had "no place in a public school of education" and "goes right along with other occult activities being allowed in several schools in the district." The school principal allowed the play to proceed and said the complaint would be evaluated after its conclusion.¹⁴⁶

Satanism, devil worship, the occult, and witches were subjects covered and/or promoted in numerous books challenged in 1990. Satanic illustrations that glorify pain were seen by a parent complaining about Scary Stories to Tell in the Dark before the Salem-Keizer district board. The book was also accused of glorifying the powers of evil (and evil intent¹⁴⁷) and preying upon the innocent by evil. The board didn't see the book the same way and voted to retain it in the district elementary school libraries without restriction.¹⁴⁸ Allegedly explicit descriptions of evil worship and sacrifice were enough, however, to get Servants of the Devil removed from school library shelves in Sandy.¹⁴⁹

An Odell/Hood River challenged materials committee went to an inordinant amount of work, including contacting the author, in response to a formal challenge against classroom use of library copies of Madeleine L'Engle's award-winning book, A Wrinkle in Time. Charges were that the book contained "things associated with sorcery, witchcraft . . . and mind reading," with its overall theme being "demonistic magical power." The complainant argued that, "The Bible warns us to stay away from such things."

Author L'Engle responded: "Alas, I suspect the parent who sees witchcraft and sorcery in A Wrinkle in Time calls her/himself a 'Christian.' Thus far, it has been only 'Christians' who have misunderstood and attacked this book. We find what we look for, we human beings, and if a parent is looking for witchcraft and sorcery, that parent is going to find it whether it's there or not. And of course, A Wrinkle in Time is about neither. . . . I see the book as my affirmation of a God of love."¹³⁰ In addition to writing the author, the review committee looked at critiques and reviews of the book as well as award notices, and talked to librarians and teachers, before recommending its retention. The school board voted to retain. Several local churches replaced copies of the book after it was discovered that many were missing from school libraries.¹³¹

"Witch theme" was the term of preference used to describe two books challenged in the Bend-La Pine School District. Porcelain Cat was said to have that story line plus discussion of the blood of serpents, whereas Anna Witch also allegedly included necromancy, or communicating with spirits of the dead. Both books were retained in separate 1990 board decisions. The book The Witches was the subject of at least four different actions, two that year and two in 1991, all starting with "witch theme" as their basis. Challenges were filed in Beaverton, Corvallis, Hillsboro and Dallas and, in each case, the book was retained. In addition to witch theme, how witches were depicted was of major concern. Complainants said children might be led to believe

any woman (i.e., mother or teacher) could be a witch, thereby undermining their faith and trust in women. Also, Witches was said to be degrading to children and guilty of being demoralizing and undermining their self-esteem. In addition, Roald Dahl's book allegedly presented witchcraft as a religion and, in summary, was a good example of how schools violated state law requiring that they emphasize instruction in ethics and morality.¹⁵²

Wait Till Helen Comes Home, the first book to be challenged in Oregon in the new decade, also allegedly dealt with the supernatural. Its cover art was said to be too frightening and its content presented too realistically (rather than fictionally) for the maturity level of Astoria's Astor Elementary School pupils. In addition, the complaint alleged that the book presented questionable characterizations of parents and portrayed death in a hopeless way that could frighten children. A review committee read the book, reviewed the library's selection policy, collected reviews and information about the author, Mary Downing Hahn, and then voted for retention. The school board followed suit,¹⁵³ leading a complainant to say, "When a challenge is made, I think the mentality of the school teachers is to protect the books. I think that is a bias that you, too, have."¹⁵⁴

The importance of parental influence, a value strongly held by a number of critics of school library and textbooks was the issue that led to a complaint about Shel Silverstein's A Light in the Attic. (See also Eagle Point's handling of this book as detailed earlier in this report.) Silverstein's poetry, according

to one elementary school parent, taught children "to do the opposite" of what they are taught by their parents. It was the second time in nine years A Light in the Attic had been challenged in the Salem-Keizer school district, and the second time it was retained by the board. Suggesting that children make their own personal choices also put Underground Kingdom in hot water in the Reynolds school district, where it was available to Fairview Elementary School pupils.¹⁵⁵ "Throughout the book, the reader is encouraged to make choices toward unknown danger, regardless of the consequences. The thought process easily transfers in a young person to experimentation with drugs, sex, running away, alcohol," said the objecting parent. A review committee report agreed, up to a point: "Some of these choices do lead to unpleasant consequences, but we recognize that this is part of life. This particular series is . . . typical of the kind of thing that could lead students on to higher level reading." The committee's recommendation to retain Underground Kingdom was approved by the school board.¹⁵⁶

The hot topic of birth control, especially among teenagers, was the subject of two complaints, one against a book of tests and the other against a high school newspaper. Removal of 85 Tests, a book of self-evaluation exercises found in the Cascade Locks K-12 school library, was requested because it included questions on birth control. A review committee voted to place the book on the restricted access list, making it available only to students in grades 9-12,¹⁵⁷ and the school board so ordered.¹⁵⁸

In Beaverton, some parents objections to the high school newspaper running ads for clinics known to provide abortions. The school board responded that the ads did not violate any existing policy, but that such policies would be reviewed.¹⁵⁹

As usual, profane language and sexual content made several books targets of challenges in 1990. As has been the case so many times in so many states, Salinger's The Catcher in the Rye was one of those targeted. The challenge against its use in a Sherwood tenth-grade English class was not acted upon because the complainant chose not to follow the school's complaint procedure, hence the book was retained.¹⁶⁰ The Salem-Keizer district took action on two challenges in consecutive meetings in February and March of 1990. The Last Mission and The View From the Cherry Tree were said to contain objectionable language, with the latter book also charged with having a murderer/drug dealer as a featured character. Both books were in elementary school libraries, and both remained there after review committee and school board votes.¹⁶¹

Profanity and drugs were joined by sex and booze, and poison, as content not suitable for teenage readers in the opinion of an Albany resident. Poison: 87th Precinct Series contained all the above and, therefore, should have been removed from the West Albany High School library, the complainant contended. A review committee disagreed,¹⁶² saying in its report, "No one has the right to censor materials for others."¹⁶³ Explicit sex, found in House Made of Dawn,¹⁶⁴ and an alleged

portrayal of sex with animals, in Searches and Seizures, led to actions in Troutdale and Washington County, respectively. In neither case did the school board uphold the request for removal. In the Washington County incident, the child of the complainant reported the book lost, leading the district to replace it after turning down an offer of a different book as a replacement.¹⁶⁹

"The pen is mightier than the sword," said a La Grande objector to continued allowance of Horror of High Ridge in elementary school libraries. "Material like this slashes young minds to impotent shreds (through imposing) gruesome violence on young readers' imaginations," the complaint continued,¹⁶⁹ adding that the book did nothing to "further the psyche, strengthen the mind, or enrich the imagination." The school board followed a review committee recommendation to remove the book from the libraries.

Schoolbook portrayals of societal groups became an issue in Oregon in 1990, with one case involving a book not new to controversy of this nature, and the other having to do with a book of relative obscurity. Mark Twain's The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, used in an Elmira tenth-grade honors English class, was challenged by a student's guardian for its use of the word "nigger" and for depicting African-Americans in a degrading way. After the First Death, written more than 100 years later by Robert Cormier, drew criticism from a Troutdale parent for its depictions of the Palestine Liberation Organization and the United States Army. The latter book was retained for use in

ninth-grade humanities courses.¹⁶⁷ It was suggested that African-American speakers be invited to the Elmira class to be involved in discussions about racial sensitivity as a way of resolving the dispute of The Aventures of Huckleberry Finn, which would continue on the list of assigned reading for the course.¹⁶⁸

Any discussion of 1990 library and textbook challenges in Oregon would not be complete without mentioning the Astoria complaint and action against the book of books, The Bible. The American Civil Liberties Union, acting on behalf of a parent, filed a complaint with the state superintendent of schools, objecting to the use of The Bible in an eighth-grade literature class. Its use, according to the ACLU, violated the First Amendment's establishment clause requiring separation of church and state. The superintendent's findings noted that the purpose of the unit using The Bible was supposed to be improving reading skills and learning about its literary and historical value. In reality, said the findings, there was no evidence that any supplementary readings listed on the course syllabus were used or that The Bible was studied in a literary, cultural or historical context. A Bible was issued each student in the class and used as the exclusive text for the six-week unit, found the superintendent. In response to the findings, the lessons were canceled for the school year.¹⁶⁹

1991: Sex and Satan Reign

Many of the Oregon actions involving book challenges in 1991 were related to those taken the previous year (i.e., The Witches

and The View from the Cherry Tree) or had to do with the Impressions reading series and have already been covered. It is likely no mere coincidence that each of the above-mentioned books was challenged in more than one locale, as a network of "concerned parents" appeared to be in operation across the state. In many cases this network had connections to the OCA, whose primary public agenda was its position in opposition to equal rights for homosexuals. Most of the remaining actions dealt with those familiar issues of sex and Satan.

One of the more unique censorship decisions, however, came over the "Channel One" news-for-the-classroom television service. While many districts had rejected the opportunity to use it because the service carried advertising messages, none was known to have canceled a day's programming because of its news content. Such was the case, however, in Eugene when Madison Middle School Principal Cecil Kribs ordered that the service's first day of programming in his school not be shown. The Channel One news that day carried a video report on the hammer attack on Michelangelo's sculpture of David. Learning this, Kribs decided not to show it because "with middle-school-age students, you just never know how they're going to react, and we didn't want a lot of tee-heeing." According to media specialist Elna Robinette, "What concerned us was the full, frontal view of the (nude) sculpture. We wouldn't want to show anything parents would be offended by." Madison was the only one of about 9,000 schools nationwide to not show the news that day.¹⁷⁰

A Girl Named Sooner was one of several books challenged because of their sexual content. Its explicitness led to its removal by school board order from the shelves of the Jefferson Middle School library.¹⁷¹ Goodbye, Paper Doll included adultery and rape in its subject matter, and had objectionable language, but a review committee in Nyssa decided it should be retained at the community's middle school.¹⁷² The alleged promotion of experimentation in teenage sex was one charge an Independence elementary school teacher brought against I Love You, Stupid, a middle school library book. Also, the book was said to promote a "blatantly sexist" view of women and portrayed relationships between young men and women that were "not ones of mutual respect."¹⁷³ The book was retained by vote of the school board.¹⁷⁴

The way incest and battering were presented in the book Night Riding failed to offer students solutions to those and other problems of concern to today's students, according to a complaint filed in Beaver. At the suggestion of the objecting parent and a review committee, it was decided to retain the book, without its cover jacket, and enclose in it a list of phone numbers students could call for information on incest and physical violence.¹⁷⁵ Being asked "rather pointed questions about childbirth," by his third grade boys after one of them checked out Being Born, caused a Lakeview parent to object to its availability in the elementary school library. The school board upheld a review committee recommendation to retain the book.¹⁷⁶

The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Family Health used line drawings to answer the type of questions raised in Being Born, and also to illustrate sexual intercourse positions, among other things. Its presence in the Beaverton School District intermediate school library was challenged, leading the principal to make it available to staff use only.¹⁷⁷

Art said to be Satanic in nature was contained in the book A Special Trick, according to a complaint filed against Eugene's Coburg Elementary School. An accompanying tape which urged students to look closely at the artwork was ordered removed by the principal, but the book was retained.¹⁷⁸ Use of the book Magic Boards, part of a Visions of the Future series, could lead to involvement in Satanic sects, felt a Dallas parent who cited the sects as a growing threat to youth and society in general. A review committee and the school board agreed the book should be retained.¹⁷⁹

"A 600-year-old witch is coming to town," proclaimed the flyers promoting storyteller Nancy Duncan's scheduled appearances before Lincoln County kindergarten through second-graders. The "witch" was Baba Yaga, a Russian folktale character in one of the stories Duncan told as part of her Oregon Coast Council for the Arts program. Despite the fact that attendance at the reading was to be by parental permission only, Duncan was asked to read a different story -- "The Chicken and the Egg."¹⁸⁰

Concerns expressed on behalf of "the Christian Community" about both the book Curses, Hexes, and Spells and its author

Daniel Cohen weren't enough to cause the Salem-Keizer school board to remove it, but its use in the Carlton Elementary School was restricted.¹⁸¹ Objections were raised against a photo of a witch performing a curse, information on how to cast a spell, and reference to Christian occultists. It was argued that such information would result in gangs, crime and Satanic groups who would choose to sacrifice animals. As for Cohen, he was accused of being a known Satanist.¹⁸² In testimony to the board, it was alleged that a student using the book was putting hexes on another student.¹⁸³

The phrase "smart-ass" is an example of profanities found by a Troutdale complainant in the book The Seventeen Gerbils of Class 4A.¹⁸⁴ The upset parent of a Sweetbriar Elementary School pupil asked that the book be removed from the school library; a review committee recommended that it be retained. The school board voted to keep it.¹⁸⁵ Inappropriate, though not profane, language found in I Hate My Brother Harry included such words as "stupid," "spit," and "hate," and actions such as throwing frogs into frosting mix and spitting into pudding. Also, there was what was termed negative depictions of sibling quarrels and tensions. All these complaints about the Dry Hollow Elementary School library book were heard by a review committee in The Dalles. The committee, and then the school board, voted to keep author Crescent Dragonwagon's work.¹⁸⁶ Inappropriate in the sense that its stories were frightening to younger readers got More Scary Stories to Tell in the Dark in trouble in West Linn and

Hillsboro, just as Scary Stories to Tell in the Dark had a year earlier in Salem. Both boards voted to retain the sequel.¹⁸⁷

1992: Multi-Media Attacks

Magazines, films, videos, and student newspapers all joined books as subjects of complaints in 1992, but it was the same type of content that led to problems, despite the medium involved. Sexual content again headed the list of irritants, followed by promotion of Satan and/or witchcraft, scary and/or violent stories, and profanity. Also, there was concern over representations of societal groups such as women and loggers. As usual, how the medium's content allegedly conflicted with some peoples's perception of Christian religious doctrine was often the true cause for action.

The presence of 12 magazines, including Bicycling, Hot Rod, Cycle World, Popular Mechanics, Discover, Inside Sports, and Sports Illustrated, in the Aumsville elementary school library and staff lounge drew objections from school board members because of the alcohol and tobacco ads carried in the publications. The board, in banning the magazines, expressed the feeling having the magazines on school grounds created a double-standard since they were against use of the products on school property. A newspaper in the West Linn school district, which includes Aumsville, editorialized: "For some students, one of those magazines might have been the key to getting them to read, to explore, to think. . . . Instead of hiding that advertising, would it be better to help the students learn to frankly discuss,

evaluate and avoid the attraction of those ads?"¹⁸⁸

Rolling Stone magazine was attacked by Oakland High School substitute teacher and parent Kathleen Young for having an "irreverent, negative and graphically sexual attitude," plus vulgar language. Initially singled out was the May 1991 issue featuring "lesbian photographs and quotes" of singer Madonna. The high school principal decided not to renew the school library's subscription and to allow back issues to be checked out or used in the library only with parental permission. "High school students have the educational expertise to evaluate their reading material. If they are not capable of making decisions now, when will they be?," asked school librarian Barbara Peebles, who appealed the decision.¹⁸⁹ "They do not need others to tell them what they should read," she added.¹⁹⁰ Economics, not censorship, was the real issue, said superintendent Joe Reed: "We're looking at cutting \$200,000. We're going to lose staff, we're going to lose programs and, at the same time, we're supposed to put out money to buy this publication? I think no!"¹⁹¹ Reed also sighted the Hazelwood School District v. Kuhlmeier decision¹⁹² in siding with the principal. Peebles then appealed to the school board, which voted 3-2 to uphold the decision. "The loss of the magazine will not be a monumental act in the total scheme of things, but to censor this publication without representation from the public will be sending a message to all that anyone finding within our library material objectionable to them can now have it removed for all others simply by filing a complaint," stated the

librarian.¹⁹³

Showing "R"-rated films on video in West Linn school district high school classrooms was discouraged by the schools superintendent after the district received a complaint relating to the showing of edited versions of Apocalypse Now and Pump Up The Volume. The superintendent, however, emphasized that the final decision was up to the schools. They, in turn, temporarily stopped showing "R" films, but decided to continue to do so in the future, saying that portions of the films "could be very powerful additions to discussions in classes."¹⁹⁴

Low-Spots, an underground newspaper charged with containing profanity, libelous and "inflammatory" material, and content "advocating students violate school rules," was confiscated and banned from the Tigard High School buildings and grounds. In response, staff members of Hi-Spots wrote an editorial titled "'Low-Spots' Says a Lot About Freedom," and planned to run it in their official school paper. When told they couldn't, they instead filled the space with large red lettering accusing school and district officials of censorship. Low-Spots' two editors were suspended from school and allowed to return only after writing reports on freedom of speech. Four students from Low-Spots and three from Hi-Spots then filed suit against the school principal and district administrators, charging violation of the students' First Amendment rights.¹⁹⁵

A Washington County judge in 1992 ruled that the Tigard-Tualitan School District violated the First Amendment when it

censored the Hi-Spots editorial and demanded prior review of Low-Spots. The judge also ruled that the district acted improperly in punishing the two student editors of the underground paper. Nevertheless, the judge did not forbid the administration from censoring future school publications or imposing similar punishments on student journalists. He instead upheld a district policy, adopted after the incident, that gives administrators broad powers to control school-sponsored publications, including prior review of on-campus newspaper articles (as per Hazelwood¹⁹⁶). The ACLU indicated its intent to appeal the decision because they and the students "did not like the prerogative given the school district" and, as one student journalist put it, "The school officials still can reach outside the school and punish students for off-campus activities." The school newspaper adviser added that "prior review always tends to have a chilling effect on freedom of expression. If students are afraid or reluctant to write about controversial subjects because the administration might not like it, stories will read like public relations pieces."¹⁹⁷

Sexual content in one form or another was very popular, at least as a target of book challengers, in 1992. At least seven books were objected to because of drawings or language indirectly or directly connected with sexual behavior. In Beaver, the art instruction book How to Draw What You See was challenged because it included drawings of nude artists' models. The complainant felt adolescents were not mature enough for that type of material

and might misuse it. The school board followed a review committee recommendation to retain the book in the elementary school media center, and include with it an "awareness letter" indicating its content had been discussed.¹⁹⁸ Nudity also was the subject of one of a half-dozen complaints lodged in the Salem-Keizer school district in 1992. Use of In the Night Kitchen, by Maurice Sendak, was criticized because of frontal nudity of a male child in a few pictures. The complainant felt that seeing such pictures might be confusing to children who are taught that their bodies are supposed to be private. The book was retained in action by the school board in support of a review committee recommendation.¹⁹⁹

Passages of graphic sexuality in the book Birdy were cited by a North Bend couple as reasons to take the book out of the high school library and to impose a ratings system for books. A review committee recommended retention of the book. Also, the committee asked that the statement "Copies of selection criteria and any challenges may be obtained from the NBHS Library/Media Center" be included in the student handbook.²⁰⁰ In Tillamook, north of North Bend on the Oregon Coast, Alice in Rapture drew objections for sections that referred to French kissing and its descriptions of bras and breasts. The Liberty Elementary School review committee recommended the book be restricted to fifth- and sixth-graders but a district review committee recommended its availability without restrictions. The school board endorsed that approach.²⁰¹

Case Study: The Clan of the Cave Bear

Receiving a great deal of media attention in 1992 was the Bethel School District's decision to remove from the Cascade Middle School library The Clan of the Cave Bear. The major concern expressed by complainants was that student readers might develop the perception that the sexual acts and values described are the norm and might be tried.²⁰² The Portland Oregonian newspaper devoted the equivalent of two full pages of space to the Cascade confrontation in particular, and the issue of book censorship in general. "In the beginning were the words. These words: Throbbing. Lust. Feverishly. Heat. And these: Cringe. Resistance. Agonized. Stung. The words were in a book, and the book sat on a shelf in the library at Cascade Middle School, near Eugene, until an eighth-grader brought it home one day last spring and left it in his family's living room," began the lead story in the Oregonian's coverage.²⁰³ In its eight years on the library shelves, The Clan of the Cave Bear had been checked out only 37 times. When Marilyn Rice's son did so, his action kicked off a debate that covered issues much greater than the "explicit and perverted sex scenes" his mother said she found on pages 125 through 367. Evolution was the premise for Jean M. Auel's book, and Marilyn and Wayne Rice are creationists. In addition, family and societal values are something the Rices exert ~~considerable~~ ^{ed} effort into instilling into their children. Understandably, a book describing in detail a Cro-Magnon woman's violent rape by a Cave Bear Clan member wasn't seen as promoting the Rice's religious beliefs or values. "The more you can protect (children)

from things that are going to cause them confusion, the better," Marilyn Rice said after deciding to challenge the book's availability in the middle school library.²⁰⁴

The Rices complained to a district Family Life Committee, expecting the book to be removed. "It was a moral issue and needed to be raised," she said. By a 10-6 vote, however, the committee recommended retaining the book, saying it fell within the acceptable, fuzzy area of "appropriateness." "The book has literary value," said district curriculum director Robert Lacy. "It's certainly not pulp or trash. . . . We need to be very careful about censoring for somebody else because of values that are held by the minority." The Rices decided to ask the school board to reconsider retention of The Clan of the Cave Bear. "I have a right to trust the schools to provide decent material for our children," said Marilyn Rice.²⁰⁵

After more than an hour of debate covering such topics as paranoia, censorship, standards and responsibility, the board voted to reconsider the committee action. Each member received a copy of Auel's book to read and was given a month in which to do it. Board chairman Wayne Watkins read it and told the Oregonian that he found the book difficult to put down and that the "juicy part" passages left him with mixed reactions. "I did not find the book that offensive, but I didn't think it was the best reading for middle-school students. It put down women. . . . I thought that concept could easily be carried over to a young guy on a date. If he wasn't happy, would he haul off and slap his

date?"²⁰⁶

It is hard walking the shaky ground between freedom and "protection," said Watkins. "We don't want children to be in a monastery. But as a school, we have to provide the best quality material. We have to draw the line somewhere."²⁰⁷ Another board member, Dave Brown, said he liked the book and found Auel's recreation of ancient humans' activities and ideas believable. As for the rape scene, he said "to me, it was describing violent rape as horrible. It was a very upsetting scene. It was not something that was being glorified." Brown added that "I'm very strong against censorship. I don't want my values and morals to be pushed on anybody else. I don't want to be the judge and jury on that book."²⁰⁸

Brown and the other board members present had to do just that on April 13. After Wayne Rice presented his case for removal of The Clan of the Cave Bear, Watkins allowed each board member to comment. He then said, "People do respond to outside stimuli - what they read, hear, see -- good and bad. I think people are influenced more by their surroundings than by genetic identity. I would like to provide the best possible influence." Brown's motion to retain the book died for lack of a second. Another board member's motion to remove it passed 5-1, Brown voting no. Expressing concern about the board's determination that written material can harm students, Brown said later that, "We're sending a message to our constituents that a certain group can decide what they can read and can't read."²⁰⁹

Cascade Middle School teacher Louise Gano, who put the disputed book on a supplementary reading list for her eighth-grade class, agreed with Brown: "I object to someone making a hard and fast rule about what kids can and can't read. I don't like book-banning." Regarding any negative influence the book might have on its readers, Gano said, "Kids do not look to cave people as role models. . . . Kids need to know there are other values in the world besides their own family's. I'd like to think school could help kids gain the self-esteem to handle negative influences and make decisions."²¹⁰

The Clan of the Cave Bear author Auel had a terse response to all the fuss: "I don't want to make an issue of this with a middle-school, but I think they're making a mistake. I don't think there's anything in the book that's going to harm any kid."²¹¹ Also, Auel said "I know that if kids are not emotionally prepared to understand something like this, they'll pass it right by. And if they do understand it, they'll see that rape is a terrible thing. . . . Kids really do understand a great deal more than parents give them credit for," said Auel, who has five children and 15 grandchildren.²¹²

Marilyn Rice disagreed with both Gano and Auel. "There's something wrong with a man if he becomes more sexually excited because the woman is crying out. . . . I can imagine a child from an unhealthy home -- from a home where the parents are not even married -- reading the book and saying, 'This is OK.'" Parents, Rice said, should guide and protect their children, and schools

should support that task. "We need to have some standard of morals and values. We've gone too far with freedom of speech (and) other freedoms."²¹³

More Sex, and Violence

The combination of sex and violence spelled trouble for Dean Koontz's Night Chills, housed in Bend and Beaverton high school libraries. The complaint filed with the Bend-La Pine School District said the book was "pornographic smut."²¹⁴ A scene in which a child's head is split open troubled board member Terry Ramsdorff more than the sexual imagery, while board member Ken Cox said he felt community people "with conservative taste . . . will appreciate us removing the book" from the Mountain View High School library. Another board member, Jan LaChapelle, said "I firmly believe the only thing we have to fear from the written word is if it's hidden," but did favor supervision of students reading Night Chills.²¹⁵ A review committee had recommended the book be put on a "restricted checkout list, but the school board voted to retain it without restrictions."²¹⁶ "It's garbage. Why don't you just pull it? Why don't you quit dancing around and just pull it?" said one objector in Beaverton, where Koontz's horror novel was challenged in 1993. A review committee recommended retaining the book. The school board at first deadlocked but, on a second vote, voted to retain the book. "I truly feel that our freedom is based on choice. The more information we have, the better decisions we can make," said a committee member in response to the board vote.²¹⁷

Also "full of violence and profanity," in the opinion of a parent, was the book Mystery Walk, available to students in Salem middle school libraries. "Bad words are on almost every page," said the objector, adding that "the book is also bizarre! Throw it away. It will not be missed."²¹⁸ The book simply has no literary value, said the complainant in requesting its removal. A review committee recommended that the book be removed from both libraries.²¹⁹ The school board, however, voted to remove it from the middle school library and shelve it in the high school library.²²⁰ My Mother Got Married and Other Disasters, available in an Albany elementary school library, was challenged for its use of the word "damn." The complaining parent said the word might offend children, who would then be too embarrassed to report it to their parents. Also, she said the book threatened values she was trying to instill in her child. When the librarian suggested the parent read the book, she responded that she had no time. The parent requested the removal of My Mother . . . and asked the school not purchase any similar books. The librarian advised her to write a letter of complaint to the district's Young Readers Choice committee. The book remains in circulation.²²¹ Also criticized for profanity was Famous All Over Town. A review committee recommended that it be retained in the Toledo High School library; no appeal was filed.²²²

The Random House Thesaurus of Slang, named one of 1988's outstanding reference books by the New York Public Library, wasn't so highly thought of by at least one Portland parent and

the David Douglas School Board. The book, which translates 12,500 standard English terms into 150,000 slang terms, drew objections for profanity, racial epithets, and slang expressions for sex and drugs. The school board turned down the request for removal from the Floyd Light Middle School library, but did order the book placed on a limited access shelf. It would be available to students only if they were directed to it by a teacher and if a teacher supervised them while they read it.²²² The two board members voting against the restricted access felt the thesaurus should have been removed entirely.²²⁴

Alvin Schwartz's Scary Stories to Tell in the Dark and More Scary Stories to Tell in the Dark, challenged in other Oregon districts in earlier years, ran into more trouble in 1992 in Dallas and Hillsboro, respectively. Fears were expressed that pupils at Whitworth Elementary School in Dallas might lose their appetites, have nightmares, and "develop a curiosity about death in unhealthy ways" by reading the original Schwartz book.²²⁵ Similar concerns were raised in Hillsboro concerning the sequel. There, the school board followed a review committee recommendation that the book be re-classified from fiction to folklore fiction at Hillsboro Elementary School.²²⁶ In Dallas, a review committee split vote was followed by a board decision to retain Scary Stories ²²⁷

Contentions that the video The House of Dies Drear causes fear through frequent references to Satan and evil, presents a false perception of history, and causes a loss of children's

security in school were raised in the Salem-Keizer District. A review committee recommended that the video be restricted, and advised teachers to preview it for appropriateness to curriculum and school objectives. The video was limited to seventh grade and above by the school board.²²⁸ In Molalla, concerns were raised about graphic photographs from horror films displayed in The Look of Horror, available in the Dickie Prairie Elementary School library. A review committee recommended that the book be restricted to fifth- through eighth-graders who requested access to it. The school board followed the committee recommendations.²²⁹

Witchcraft Flourishes in Salem

Content allegedly promoting witchcraft was again the subject of numerous complaints filed in 1992. The similarity of the complaints provided evidence of support from, if not the involvement of, far right organizations including the Oregon Citizens Alliance. Also, several of the complaints again (ironically) came from residents of the Salem-Keizer School District, putting that district at the top of the list in number of challenges reported over the past quarter-century.

Salem challenges included: charges that The Magic Pot is about a demon that does magic, implying tha witchcraft is good, with the possible result being children dabbling in witchcraft; objections about references to the occult and witchcraft in Witches, Pumpkins, and Grinning Ghosts, along with suggestions that children born on Halloween were able to see and talk with

ghosts, possibly leading them to practice witchcraft, according to parent/complainant Tricia Munoz;²³⁰ and accusations that Secret Spells and Curious Charms included spells and selections taken from adult books of black magic, and could be considered a how-to book on spells.²³¹ The latter book was available in elementary school libraries and used as supplementary material in a section of an elementary reading program called "Mathamagics." The complaint, lodged by a self-described born-again Christian,²³² also stated that black magic is considered a form of religion (a la Secular Humanism) and that allowing it to be promoted by housing Secret Spells and Curious Charms in a public school library violated the First Amendment requirement for separation of church and state. All three "witchcraft" books were recommended for retention by review committees, with the school board voting to retain in each instance.²³³ "When you pull a book off the shelves, you're not only restricting it from your child, you're restricting it from my child. I have confidence in myself as a parent that I can give balance to anything they read," said a school board member voting to retain Secret Spells and Curious Charms.²³⁴ In the case of Witches, Pumpkins, and Grinning Ghosts, the review committee concluded that the book was not a how-to manual on witchcraft but, instead, described Halloween customs in different countries and offered a factual background to its significant folklore tradition.²³⁵

Witchcraft was under attack in places other than Salem in 1992, but not to the extent as in the state capital. The only

other known action was in The Dalles, where removal of the book Halloween ABC was sought. Concerns expressed were that the theme of the book was witchery (evidenced by inclusion of "evil, murder, and a very blatant example of incantation," according to the complainant²³⁶), and that its format was misleading. A review committee recommended, and the school board ordered, the book reclassified as poetry rather than picture-book in the Colonel Wright Elementary School library.²³⁷

A Wilsonville parent affiliated with the OCA alleged that Piggybook ridiculed the traditional role of women in the family as well as glorifying alternative lifestyles. Anthony Browne's kindergarten picture book, available in the elementary school library, "encourages children to call parents pigs," according to the objector. The school temporarily removed the book from its library, but put it back when the parent failed to attend a meeting called to discuss his complaint.²³⁸

The influence of religious doctrine on complainants was even more evident -- even if the complainant wasn't clearly identified as a member of a far right organization -- in challenges against Earthkeepers, an environment-based science curriculum taught in four-day and night optional camps for children in grades six through eight. In Bend, allegations were made that the program promoted "New Age" and "Eastern" religion, and did not expose children to "all sides" of environmental issues. In particular, objectors charged that the curriculum's use of a spider-web symbol and a "magic spot" -- a private area in camp where

children could write in their journals, made it "anti-Christian." One objector said an instructor hugging a tree may suggest "Native American religion," suggested that the lyrics "hello, sun" and "hello, moon" in one of the program's songs can be interpreted as "paganistic," and alleged that instructors may be knowingly or unknowingly indoctrinating students with "New Age" religion, which he described as a "mixture of Hinduism, eastern mysticism, and witchcraft." Members of the local timber industry put forth the complaints that all sides of environmental issues were not being addressed and challenged the backgrounds of the program instructors. The district superintendent canceled the outdoor camp four days before it was scheduled to begin and ordered a replacement for the Earthkeepers curriculum in the program. The district lost \$14,000 in staff compensation and in rental costs of the camp due to the last-minute cancelation. A former program instructor lamented: "My concern is that small special interest groups brought some pressure against the administration. (As a result) the kids suffer and true education suffers." A parent agreed, saying "It was not right. It's not fair. The administration wimped out to a small group of parents." The superintendent responded that he "did not have all the answers" to the questions raised by the objecting parents and the timber industry.²³⁹

The portrayal of loggers in the book Eli's Song, written by a local teacher, was one reason behind requests for its removal from the Molalla schools' kindergarten through eighth-grade

library. The objector alleged that the book depicts loggers and the state in such a negative light that "when people come to Oregon they are going to expect to see rednecks and fools." He charged author Monte Killingsworth with "spewing venom on the very community he lives in." Other charges against the book included allegations that it promoted suicide as "an option or a way out or getting your point of view across or getting your way." Killingsworth said his message was that kids should not kill themselves for a cause. (His book's plot deals with a boy threatening to jump from a tree if loggers cut down a forest.) The superintendent of schools upheld a review committee recommendation to retain the book, prompting 27 people to sign a letter to the school board. The letter said: "We are gravely concerned regarding the 'eco-mania' that is being pushed on our children in the classroom." It went on to assert that because the timber industry financially supports schools, its point of view should also be represented if school buildings are to be used "to promote and host radical preservationist ideas."²⁴⁰ The superintendent again upheld the review committee recommendation to retain the book, and the school board agreed.²⁴¹ The controversy began when the Rural Dell Education Association rented a school building in which to have Killingsworth sign copies of Eli's Song. Protestors attended with flyers about the timber industry, and representatives of a local timber group presented a copy of The Timbear Coloring Book to the school principal, asking that it be included in the library.²⁴²

1993: Homosexuality in the Schools

The Oregon Citizens Alliance campaign against homosexuality, expressed heretofore through using the ballot box to fight equal rights for gays, was extended into the schools in 1993. An OCA member expressed concern about the homosexual content of five books in the Bend High School library, and requested their removal. The complainant said she found the books listed under the subheadings "gay," "homosexuality," and "lesbian" in the library's computer catalog, but had not read any of them in their entirety.²⁴³ The books attacked for "glamorizing immoral sex and putting a stamp of approval on it"²⁴⁴ were: Annie on My Mind, The Arizona Kid, The David Kopay Story, Hey Dollface, and The Concise Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English (aka: Partridge's Slang English). In addition to the homosexual content, the objector also found bothersome drug issues brought up in, for example, Kopay's story of his career as a professional football player. The dictionary of slang was charged with teaching children to use vulgar and useless expressions. The Bend-La Pine school board backed the recommendation of a review committee to retain the books.²⁴⁵ Complainant Dorothy Oak, director of the Deschutes County branch of the OCA, called the board decision "deplorable," adding that "this is a very dangerous trend. Censorship in the right arena is fine. I know I am not alone." But Oak was alone in stating her concerns at the board meeting, as several parents objected to her comments and praised the board for keeping the books available. "These are my children," said

Beth O'Callaghan. "I will teach them what's right and wrong -- not someone else." Another parent, Homer Hopworth, asked, "If we start down this road (of censorship), how and when and where do we stop?"²⁴⁶ (Removal from the Deschutes County Library of the five books and 11 others purportedly promoting homosexuality was sought -- unsuccessfully -- by the same complainant a few weeks before she went to the school board with her objections.²⁴⁷)

Sex of the type more commonly attacked variety, at least up to this point in the chronology, came under fire in Gresham and Corvallis, where complaints were filed against Gnomes and Will the Nurse Make Me Take My Take My Underwear Off? The first book contained sexual references and nudity, as well as promotion of poor health habits (wine drinking and pipe smoking) and cruelty by gnomes to other creatures, according to the complaint. Its removal from the Powell Valley Elementary School library was requested. A review committee restricted the book to an "adult" shelf.²⁴⁸ In Corvallis, complaints about the "underwear" book were that it included slang terms for female genitalia, along with other objectionable language. The request for its removal from a seventh/eighth-grade library was rejected by a review committee.²⁴⁹

Another type of objectionable language -- profanity -- was the nexus of at least a half-dozen Oregon complaints in 1993, just as had been the case in other recent years. Books targeted included Erich Maria Remarque's classic, All Quiet on the Western Front, available in Sandy's Cedar Ridge Middle School library and

used for eight years by an advanced sixth-grade class²⁵⁰ from Sandy Elementary School. A parent argued that using the book sent the oft-cited mixed message to students that you can't use foul language in school, but you can read the same words in school books.²⁵¹ Also, the complainant said All Quiet on the Western Front "encouraged children to circumvent established authority."²⁵² The objector requested that sections of the book that conflict with the school's "codes and rules" be deleted with a felt-tip pen. "I don't want the baby thrown out with the bath water," explained the complainant. "Just throw out the dirty water." A review committee decided to keep the book -- without expurgations. According to a school official, All Quiet on the Western Front was chosen because it is "a classic of world literature, because it is interesting to students, and because it is challenging . . . for high-level reading students." Within the context of the book, said the review committee, "the language is acceptable. We believe students can understand the difference between children in school and men in war."²⁵³

The Boy Who Lost Face and My Brother Sam is Dead, the former shelved in a Beaverton elementary school library, and the latter used in a Sweet Home sixth-grade language arts class, contained profanity found objectionable by a parent in each community. In both cases, review committee recommendations to retain the books were followed. "The committee did recognize the presence of profanity in the book; however, they did not feel that the use was offensive in the context of the story," said the Sweet Home

committee report regarding My Brother Sam is Dead.

Profanity, combined with disrespect for authority, led to objections over Portland cartoonist Jeff Groening's Akbar and Jeff's Guide to Life. The book by the "Simpsons" creator "does not portray values we want to pass along to our children," said the objector. In response to the complaint seeking the book's removal from the middle/senior high school library in Sisters, a review committee voted for its retention. "The review process sparked a very healthy discussion in my high school newspaper class about First Amendment issues," said a teacher at the school. "I think it was a good exercise for the class and the school to revisit the First Amendment and what it stands for."²⁵⁴ The View from the Cherry Tree, available in the McBride Elementary School in St. Helens, was cited for profanity because it featured a character, a cat, named "S.O.B." Also, removal of the book was requested because it was thought to have a negative and disrespectful attitude toward an older character and because it was "violent and gruesome."²⁵⁵ A review committee voted to remove the book from the school library for one year, until the issue "is not a hot item."²⁵⁶ The committee recommended that the cover be removed from the hard-cover copy, and that its use be limited to mature fifth- and sixth-graders. The school board followed the committee's recommendations.²⁵⁷ The objector also suggested that alternative books from Christian bookstores be used in place of the challenged book. None had been purchased by the end of the year, however.²⁵⁸

A quartet of books, in addition to The View from the Cherry Tree, were charged with being too violent or scary for young readers. Pinkerton, Behave was felt to be too scary for kindergarteners at the La Pine Elementary School because it portrays a burglar coming into a house and pointing a gun at a mother. It was retained by the school board following a review committee recommendation.²⁵⁹ Nightmares: Poems to Trouble Your Sleep, according to a Pendleton complainant, could cause nightmares because of its scariness and violence. Also, the Washington Elementary School library book does not teach good healthy morals, said the objector. The book was restricted upon recommendation of a review committee.²⁶⁰ Concern was expressed in Salem that another Maurice Sendak book, Outside Over There, might cause nightmares and arouse children's fears that they might get kidnapped by goblins, as happened to a baby in the book. The book was retained by the school board upon recommendation of a review committee.²⁶¹

Illustrations that could be too frightening for younger readers was one complaint against Horrororgami, found on the shelves of the Glendale Elementary School library.²⁶² Another, more controversial, accusation was that the book had Satanic overtones. "There was the inclusion of things about werewolves and ghosts and goblins," conceded the district superintendent in explaining the school board's vote to remove Horrororgami, "and since there were other books on origami that don't include (those) references, the board decided to pull the book."

Following the action, 20 district teachers petitioned the school board to reverse the ban, calling the incident a violation of district procedures. "When a policy is in place, it should not be ignored," said one teacher signing the petition. The board, however, stood by its decision, with one member deriding the petition as a "politically correct stance" that no book should be banned. "I just don't agree with that," said the board member.²⁶³ The board agreed to develop new policies for the review of challenged library materials since the policy in question dealt only with instructional materials.²⁶⁴

"Instructing children in the occult" and having Satanic content were charges leveled against Bumps in the Night, available in a Sweet Home elementary school library. A teacher and a parent group organized through a local church took the issue back to a review committee after it made a preliminary decision to retain the book. The committee again recommended retention and told the parents they could have the school ensure that their children would not be assigned or allowed to read Bumps in the Night. "The book does not instruct children in the occult. The ghost in the story is a friendly horse, not a scary figure," wrote the committee. The committee report also warned principals and teachers to be "sensitive to potential objections if they intend to use the book." The library received additional inquiries believed to be related to local religious right activists and the OCA, including questions regarding whether the library stocked Heather Has Two Mommies and Daddy's Roommate,

targeted in public libraries throughout the state for their alleged promotion of homosexuality.²⁶⁵ The Egypt Game is based on the occult, teaches Egyptian culture and religious beliefs, teaches that children should disobey adults, and encourages dangerous and illegal activities, according to two complaints filed against the continued inclusion of the book in the La Pine Elementary School library. It was retained by a decision of the Bend-La Pine school board, which followed a review committee recommendation.²⁶⁶

Satan reared its evil head -- its whole body, in fact -- once too often and too graphically in the opinion of the Coquille High School principal. According to tradition, a sign on the side of the school depicting its mascot, a red devil, is repainted every year by CHS seniors. After approving the rehangng of the repainted sign, the principal told the students that it was Satanic and evil and asked them to make changes in the depiction of the devil's teeth and face. Even after the changes, the principal said the sign promoted Satanism and violated the separation of church and state; it could not be hung on school property. The students complained to the school board, saying they were never given guidelines to follow and claiming the principal had a philosophical objection to the devil as a mascot. The board agreed that the sign could be hung if further modified. In spite of the decision, a new sign appeared in the devil's old spot on the wall. Ordered by the principal, it read "Coquille High School" Its \$5,000 cost was paid out of interest from the

student body fund. Eventually, after considerable revision, the student-produced red devil sign was placed alongside the one ordered by the principal.²⁶⁷

"Blasphemy" charged a Salem parent objecting to how Jesus' name appears in Beverly Cleary's Ramona The Brave. "Use of Jesus' name in vain" occurred five times in the book, said the complainant, referring to occasions when a group of boys taunted a character named Beezus by rhyming her name with that of Jesus.²⁶⁸ Removal of the book from an elementary school library was requested, but was denied by a school board decision upholding a review committee recommendation.²⁶⁹ Succeeding in the World of Work, a text used in a Finn Rock high school career education class, was challenged for allegedly inquiring into students' religious backgrounds. Sighting a survey in the book which asked student feelings on topics such as health, family, and religion, a school board member raising the objection said, "We do not need to inquire on people's religious beliefs in a public school." Following the complaint, a review committee voted to retain for classroom use the book and the chapter in which the survey appeared.²⁷⁰

Still another religion-based complaint dealt with Quest, a self-esteem and drug-abuse prevention program planned for the Tigard school district's middle schools. It was alleged that the program was "anti-Christian," "anti-family," and "dangerous" for resembling "group therapy." Its rejection was requested. The Oregon wing of Phyllis Schlafly's Eagle Forum provided assistance

to a group of parents calling themselves "Concerned Parents for Academics," formed specifically to challenge the adoption of the program. Objectors went to the media and local churches, circulated petitions, wrote numerous letters-to-the-editor, invited ministers and psychologists to speak about the dangers of the program, and disrupted school board meetings in their efforts against Quest's adoption by the district. Calling the program "very supportive of family values," the school district superintendent upheld a review committee's unanimous recommendation to adopt Quest as a supplementary curriculum, recognizing that parents have the option of removing their own children from the lessons. Many in the community supported the program after the decision and its implementation. "I have nothing but praise for this program and the positive effects it had on my students," said one teacher. "I have taught the curriculum, and it's terrific."²⁷²

Books offering a positive presentation of drunkenness and a negative one of hunters fall at the end of this review of 25 years of reported Oregon challenges to books, films and videos, newspapers, magazines, readings, plays, outdoor and self-esteem programs, television news services, signs, and whatever else has been attacked. First, however, the magazine YM needs to be mentioned. The young adult periodical was thought to be inappropriate for the Canyonville upper elementary school library. A review committee recommended, and the school board agreed, that the magazine should be restricted to older students

and that a suitable replacement would be found.

As for books dealing with drunks and hunters, one was "removed" via a principal's arbitrary decision, and the other was retained through the more common review committee approach to dealing with challenges. Father Christmas, available in a Klamath Falls elementary school library, was objected to because of its presentation of drunkenness. Objectors received complaint forms from the school, but never returned them. The school principal, nevertheless, seized the book. At last report, it remains in his desk, inaccessible to students.²⁷² The last known 1993 action dealt with the case of Ted. Part of a 10-part reading series designed for beginning readers, and available in a Hood River elementary school library, the book, written in simple three-letter words, contains the word "bad" over a picture of a man hunting a bear cub. Such a depiction puts hunters in a bad light, said parents seeking Ted's removal. A review committee saw it differently. Concluding that children (at least) would recognize the story as fiction, it voted to retain the book. "The story is written from the cub's point of view and the hunter would indeed seem like a 'bad man' to a cub who is being shot at by the hunter," wrote the committee in its report. A balanced view of hunting, it added, is presented by the schools when other curricular material is taken into account.²⁷³

So it goes in Oregon: 200-plus examples of books and other media being challenged over the past quarter-century by voices from the right, the middle, the left, and sometimes from

somewhere that can't be easily classified. Each objector feels he or she is correct, and each has a right to be heard. As the American Library Association says, "ideas can be dangerous." But, continues the ALA, "suppression of ideas is fatal to a democratic society. Freedom itself is a dangerous way of life, but it is ours."²⁷⁴

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A Quarter-Century of Challenges to Oregon Public School
Text and Library Books
(Plus a few other examples of challenged media)

1968		
None Found		
1969		
All books with bad language	Monroe	Removed
A Patch of Blue	Dallas	Removed
Holiday (magazine)	Drain	Removed
Newsweek (magazine)	Drain	Retained
Nigger	Dallas	Removed
"	Monroe	Removed
1970		
Most books with bad language	Monroe	Retained
Nigger	Monroe	Restricted
1971		
None Found		
1972		
None Found		
1973		
In the Night Kitchen	Phoenix	Retained
Where the Wild Things Are	Phoenix	Retained
1974		
None Found		
1975		
Dictionary of American Slang	Gervais	Removed
Of Mice and Men	Halsey	Retained
Promise of America	Fern Ridge	Restricted
The Angry Hills	Gervais	Removed
The Bird's Nest	Gervais	Removed
The Betrayers	Gervais	Removed
The Catcher in the Rye, Time, 24 other publications	Roseburg	Removed
The Man Who Loved Cat Dancing	Gervais	Removed
1976		
Texts dealing with evolution	Milton-Freewater	Retained
1977		
Future Shock (film)	Hillsboro	Restricted
Life (magazine)	Springfield	Removed
Man: A Course of Study (package)	Roseburg	Removed
The Lottery (film)	Hillsboro	Removed

None Found		
1978		
1979		
A Man's Body: an Owner's Manual	Monroe	Removed
A Woman's Body: an Owner's Manual	Monroe	Removed
Cars and Trucks and Things That Go	Pleasant Hill	Retained
1980		
The Bible (distribution of)	Grants Pass	Refused
1981		
Bang, Bang, You're Dead	Salem	Retained
Dungeons and Dragons (game)	Roseburg	Removed
I'll Get You	Salem	Retained
The Bible (distribution of)	Josephine County	Refused
The Stupids Die	Seaside	Retained
1982		
Herbie Capleenies	Hermiston	Removed
Pippin (musical)	Beaverton	Retained
1983		
Crazy (comic book)	Central Point	Removed
The Christians (film series)	McMinnville	Retained
1984		
Changing Bodies, Changing Lives	Sandy	Restricted
Changing Bodies, Changing Lives	Sandy	Removed
Harlequin romances	Glide	Removed
Magic Boards (Visions of the Future series)	Philomath	Removed
On Reading Palms	Philomath	Result Unknown
Seven Arrows	Creswell	Restricted
Summer of '42	Central Point	Retained
The Children's Book of the Earth	Medford	Retained
The Three Billy Goats Gruff	Eagle Point	Retained
The Vines of Yarrabee	Medford	Retained
Today's Basic Science	Ashland	Removed
1985		
Introduction to Social Science	South Umpqua	Rejected
Let's Talk About Health	Salem	Retained
1986		
In the Rabbit's Garden	Boring	Retained
Southern Fried Rat and Other Gruesome Tales	La Grande	Restricted

1987		
Footfalls	Redmond	Retained
Get Oregonized	Statewide	Adopted
Impressions (reading series)	Phoenix	Adopted
" " " "	Ashland	Adopted
Just Good Friends	Eugene	Restricted
Manchild in the Promised Land	Parkrose	Result Unknown
Nightmares: Poems to Trouble		
Your Sleep	Eagle Point	Restricted
Of Mice and Men (play)	Milwaukie	Revised
Values Clarification	Jefferson	Restricted
Various titles (Longarm series)	Jordan Valley	Removed

1988		
God, the Universe,		
and Hot Fudge Sundaes	Canby	Retained
Gods or Demons?	Canby	Retained
Impressions (reading series)	Phoenix	Retained
" " " "	Troutdale	Rejected
" " " "	North Marion	Retained
More Scary Stories to Tell		
in the Dark	The Dalles	Retained
Space Station Seventh Grade	La Grande	Retained
The Prince in Waiting	Canby	Retained
The Witches of Worm	Mount Angel	Retained
The Woman's Encyclopedia		
of Myths and Secrets	North Bend	Restricted
The Devil's Piper	Canby	Retained
To Take a Dare	Prineville	Retained

1989		
A Clockwork Orange (film)	Brookings	Removed
Alanna	Hillsboro	Retained
Angel Dust Blues	Prineville	Retained
Bumps in the Night	Tillamook	Retained
Down a Dark Hall	Mulino	Retained
Fiction, in general	St. Paul	Restricted
If Beale Street Could Talk	St. Paul	Removed
In the Hands of the Goddess	Hillsboro	Retained
Karen Kepplewhite is the		
World's Best Kisser	Eagle Point	Retained
Ladies Day	Scappoose	Retained
Lysistrata	Scappoose	Retained
The Kid Who Only Hit Homers	Beaverton	Retained
Then Again, Maybe I Won't	Salem	Retained
The Complete Book of Kissing	Eagle Point	Retained
The Magic Grandfather	Eagle Point	Result Unknown
The Restless Dead: Ghostly Tales		
from Around the World	Prineville	Retained
The Stand	Beaverton	Restricted
The Wolfman of Beacon Hill	Bend	Retained
The Woman Who Rides Like A Man	Hillsboro	Retained
To Take a Dare	Prineville	Restricted
Zeralda's Ogre	Lebanon	Remove

	1990	
85 Tests	Cascade Locks	Restricted
After the First Death	Troutdale	Retained
A Light in the Attic	Salem	Retained
Angel Dust Blues	Prineville	Restricted
Anna Witch	La Pine	Retained
A Wrinkle in Time	Odell	Retained
Blithe Spirit (play)	Springfield	Retained
Christian Science Monitor (newspaper)	Jefferson	Retained
House Made of Dawn	Troutdale	Retained
Impressions (Reading series)	Redmond	Retained
" " " "	Reedville	Retained
Poison (87th Precinct series)	Albany	Retained
Porcelain Cat	LaPine	Retained
Scary Stories to Tell in the Dark	Salem	Retained
Searches and Seizures	Washington County	Retained
Servants of the Devil	Sandy	Removed
Sunship Earth	Reedville	Retained
" "	Washington County	Retained
The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn	Elmira	Retained
The Bible	Astoria	Removed
The Catcher in the Rye	Sherwood	Retained
The Earth Speaks	Reedville	Retained
" "	Washington County	Retained
The Horror of High Ridge	La Grande	Removed
The Last Mission	Salem	Retained
The View from the Cherry Tree	Salem	Retained
The Witches	Corvallis	Retained
Underground Kingdom (Choose Your Own Adventure series)	Fairview	Retained
" " " "	Reynolds	Retained
Wait Till Helen Comes	Astoria	Retained

	1991	
A History of the United States	Eagle Point	Rejected
A Girl Named Sooner	Jefferson	Removed
A Light in the Attic	Eagle Point	Retained
A Special Trick	Coburg	Retained
A Special Trick (tape)	Coburg	Removed
Baba Yaba (oral presentation)	Lincoln County	Canceled
Being Born	Lakeview	Retained
The Chicken and the Egg (oral presentation)	Lincoln County	Restricted
Channel One (TV news service)	Eugene	Removed
Curses, Hexes, and Spells	Salem	Retained
Eric	Eagle Point	Retained
Goodbye, Paper Doll	Nyssa	Retained
I Hate My Brother Harry	The Dalles	Retained
I Love You, Stupid	Independence	Retained
Impressions (Reading series)	Klamath County	Retained
" " " "	Lincoln County	Retained
" " " "	Newport	Retained

" " " "	North Marion	Removed
Magic Boards (Vision of the Future Series)	Dallas	Retained
More Scary Stories to Tell in the Dark	West Linn	Retained
" " " "	Hillsboro	Retained
Night Riding	Beaver	Retained
The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Family Health	Beaverton	Removed
The View from the Cherry Tree	Lake Oswego	Retained
The Witches	Beaverton	Removed
" "	Dallas	Retained
" "	Hillsboro	Retained
1992		
Alice in Rapture, Sort of Apocalypse Now, Pump Up the Volume, and other R-rated films	Tillamook	Retained
Bicycling, Hot Rod, Popular Mechanics, Cycle World, Discover, Inside Sports, Sports Illustrated, and five other magazines	West Linn	Retained
Birdy	Aumsville	Removed
Curses, Hexes, and Spells	North Bend	Retained
Earthkeepers (science curriculum)	Carlton	Restricted
Eli's Song	Bend	Removed
Famous All Over Town	Molalla	Retained
Halloween ABC	Toledo	Retained
Hi-Spots (student newspaper)	The Dalles	Retained
How to Draw What You See	Tigard	Restricted
In the Night Kitchen	Beaver	Retained
Low Spots (underground paper)	Salem	Retained
More Scary Stories to Tell in the Dark	Tigard	Removed
My Mother Got Married	Hillsboro	Retained
And Other Disasters	Albany	Retained
Mystery Walk	Salem	Retained
Night Chills	Bend	Retained
Piggybook	Wilsonville	Retained
Rolling Stone (magazine)	Oakland	Not Renewed
" " (shelved copies)	Oakland	Restricted
Scary Stories to Tell in the Dark	Dallas	Retained
Secret Spells and Curious Charms	Salem	Retained
The Clan of the Cave Bear	Eugene	Removed
The House of Dies Drear (video)	Salem	Restricted
The Look of Horror	Molalla	Restricted
The Magic Pot	Salem	Retained
The Random House Thesaurus of Slang	Portland	Retained
The Seventeen Gerbils of Class 4A	Troutdale	Retained
Wellness: Stress Management	Eagle Point	Removed
Witches, Pumpkins and Grinning Ghosts	Salem	Retained

1993

Akbar & Jeff's Guide to Life	Sisters	Retained
All Quiet on the Western Front	Sandy	Retained
Annie on My Mind	Bend	Retained
Bumps in the Night	Sweet Home	Retained
Father Christmas	Klamath Falls	Removed
Gnomes	Powell Valley	Restricted
Halloween ABC	Salem	Retained
Hey Dollface	Bend	Retained
Horrorgram	Glendale	Removed
My Brother Sam is Dead	Sweet Home	Retained
Night Chills	Beaverton	Removed
Nightmares: Poems to		
Trouble Your Sleep	Pendleton	Restricted
Outside Over There	Salem	Retained
Pinkerton, Behave!	La Pine	Restricted
Quest (self-esteem, drug-abuse program)	Tigard	Restricted
Ramona the Brave	Salem	Retained
Succeeding in the World of Work	Finn Rock	Retained
Ted (part of a reading series)	Hood River	Retained
The Arizona Kid	Bend	Retained
The Boy Who Lost His Face	Beaverton	Retained
The Concise Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English	Bend	Retained
The David Kopay Story	Bend	Retained
The Egypt Game	La Pine	Retained
The View From the Cherry Tree	St. Helens	Removed
Will the Nurse Make Me Take My Underwear Off?	Corvallis	Retained
YM (young adult periodical)	Canyonville	Restricted

Sources: Clippings from Oregon and Washington state newspapers; newspaper articles cited in Newsletter on Intellectual Freedom, American Library Association, Chicago, Ill.; Oregon Intellectual Freedom Clearing House, Oregon State Library, Salem, Ore.; People For the American Way, Washington, D.C.

Note: Some entries may be listed under a year one off from the one in which they actually occurred, as People for the American Way does not provide specific dates of actions on challenges, only the school years in which the actions took place.